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# THE CONSTANT NYMPH

*(A Play in Three Acts)*

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# THE CONSTANT NYMPH

*A Play in Three Acts*

FROM THE NOVEL OF
MARGARET KENNEDY

BY
MARGARET KENNEDY
AND
BASIL DEAN

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FIRST EDITION

# THE CONSTANT NYMPH

at
Selwyn Theatre, New York
on Thursday, December 9, 1926

George C. Tyler in association with Basil Dean, Inc.
presents

## THE CONSTANT NYMPH

a play in three acts
by Margaret Kennedy and Basil Dean

*CAST*

(The characters in the order of their appearance)

*Lewis Dodd* ..... Glenn Anders
*Linda Cowlard* ..... Marion Warring-Manley
*Kate Sanger* ..... Olive Reeves-Smith
*Katerina* ..... Loretta Higgins
*Kiril Trigorin* ..... Paul Ker
*Paulina Sanger* ..... Helen Chandler
*Teresa Sanger* ..... Beatrix Thomson
*Jacob Birnbaum* ..... Louis Sorin
*Antonia Sanger* ..... Flora Sheffield
*Roberto* ..... Claude Rains
*Susan* ..... Gloria May Kelly
*Florence Churchill* ..... Lotus Robb
*Charles Churchill* ..... Edward Emery
*Millicent Gregory* ..... Jane Savile
*Sir Bartlemy Pugh* ..... Sidney Paxton
*Peveril Leyburn* ..... Leo Carroll
*Erda Leyburn* ..... Olive Reeves-Smith
*Dr. Dawson* ..... J. H. Brewer
*Lydia Mainwaring* ..... Loretta Higgins
*Robert Mainwaring* ..... Barry Jones
*An Usher* ..... Harry Sothern
*A Fireman* ..... Thomas Coffin Cook
*A Clerk* ..... Paul Nugent
*Madame Marxse* ..... Katherine Stewart

The play staged by Basil Dean
The music composed by Eugene Goossens
The décor by George W. Harris

# THE CONSTANT NYMPH

As first produced by Basil Dean at the New Theatre, London, September 14, 1926.

## CAST

| | |
|---|---|
| *Lewis Dodd* | * Noel Coward |
| *Linda Cowlard* | Mary Clare |
| *Kate Sanger* | Marie Ney |
| *Kiril Trigorin* | Aubrey Mather |
| *Paulina Sanger* | Helen Spencer |
| *Teresa Sanger* | Edna Best |
| *Jacob Birnbaum* | Keneth Kent |
| *Antonia Sanger* | Elissa Landi |
| *Roberto* | Tony de Lungo |
| *Susan* | Elsie Clarke |
| *Florence Churchill* | Cathleen Nesbitt |
| *Charles Churchill* | Cecil Parker |
| *Millicent Gregory* | Marie Ney |
| *Sir Bartlemy Pugh* | Aubrey Mather |
| *Peveril Leyburn* | Harold Scott |
| *Erda Leyburn* | Margot Sieveking |
| *Dr. Dawson* | Craighall Sherry |
| *Lydia Mainwaring* | Marjorie Gabain |
| *Robert Mainwaring* | David Hawthorne |
| *An Usher* | Guy Pelham Boulton |
| *A Fireman* | Charles Garry |
| *A City Clerk* | Philip Wade |
| *Madame Marxse* | Margaret Yarde |

* Subsequently taken by John Gielgud.

## CHARACTERS

Lewis Dodd
Linda Cowlard
Kate Sanger
Kiril Trigorin
Paulina Sanger
Teresa Sanger
Jacob Birnbaum
Antonia Sanger
Roberto
Susan
Florence Churchill
(*Afterwards wife of Lewis Dodd*)
Charles Churchill
Millicent Gregory
Sir Bartlemy Pugh
Peveril Leyburn
Erda Leyburn
Dr. Dawson
Lydia Mainwaring
Robert Mainwaring
An Usher
A Fireman
A City Clerk
Madame Marxse

## SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

*"The Circus"*

ACT I: The Living Room at the Karindehütte, Austrian Tyrol.

SCENE 1: An evening in May.

SCENE 2: Morning three weeks later.

*"The Silver Sty"*

ACT II: The Drawing-Room at Strand-on-the-Green, London.

SCENE 1: A late afternoon in December.

SCENE 2: An afternoon in March.

ACT III: *"Three Meet"*

SCENE 1: The Artistes' Room in Queen's Hall, London, The same night.

SCENE 2: Pension Marxse in Brussels. Evening of the following day.

# ACT ONE

# THE CONSTANT NYMPH

## ACT ONE

### Scene I

Scene—*The living room at the Karindehütte on a May evening. At the back a large door C, with windows on either side giving a lovely view of the Austrian Tyrol in spring. It is apparent that the house is at a considerable elevation; there are views of the upper parts of hillsides. Seen from the audience, the rear portion of the room is raised about a foot, forming a sort of dais. Above this raised portion is a wooden gallery with doors to the bedrooms, two of which face the audience. The remaining rooms are apparently beyond an archway at the head of the staircase R concealed by a shabby piece of drapery. In the foreground there is a large doorway down R leading to music room. On the opposite side is a large fireplace L. Door to the kitchen is under the staircase up R. On the dais at back L a grand piano, keyboard at right angles to audience. On R side of dais a shabby leather screen in one fold of which someone has impudently cut a round hole in which to insert one's head. Right down*



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*the centre of the lower portion of the room is a large oblong table, with* Sanger's *chair at head, facing the audience. The whole place is shockingly untidy, books, music, manuscript, articles of clothing, flowers, satchels, shoes, etc., strewn everywhere. And yet the whole place has a distinct atmosphere of its own, artistic feeling fighting the squalor.*

Linda *is half asleep in a hammock on the verandah formed by the projecting portion of the bedrooms on the first floor. These are supported by wooden pillars seen through the windows.* Lewis *is trying over his Opera at the piano, humming and strumming and writing corrections into his MS.* Kate's *voice is heard off, practising agility exercises. In the rare silences, the faint, intermittent tinkle of cow bells is heard, as though the animals were all around the house, straying and browsing on the steep Alpine meadow.*

Lewis

[*Humming*]: Gentle earth, more lightly lie, on a maid untimely slain—unti-imely slain——

Linda

[*Bawling*]: Kate!

Lewis

[*Banging on piano*]: Damn! Damn! [*Bangs again*]: Three damns!

LINDA

Ka-ate!

LEWIS

[*To himself*]: Oh, shut up!

LINDA

Kate!

LEWIS

Not here! [*Hums*]: Gentle earth—— [*Writes in MS.*]

KATE

[*Singing off*]: La, la, la, la-a-a! La, la, la, la, la, la, la!

LEWIS

Ten million devils! Kate!

LINDA

Kate!

[KATE *appears.*]

KATE

Whatever is the matter? Oh, was I disturbing you?

LEWIS

Oh, not at all. It doesn't disturb me a bit. Of course I can work with your filthy caterwauling going on.

KATE

I'm sorry. I get so little time for practice. But I'll stop if it disturbs you.

[KATE *goes into the kitchen.*]

LINDA

Kate! What about supper?

LEWIS

[*Going to verandah door, grimly*]: Kate has passed away, Sanger's had a fit, the supper is all burnt up and your only che-ild, Susan, has fallen into the lake.

LINDA

[*Sitting up in alarm*]: Mercy! [*Sees that he is laughing*]: Oh! it's only you, Lewis.

LEWIS

[*Returning to piano and strumming*]: As you say, only me!

[TRIGORIN *appears in doorway, carrying suitcases. He is a large Russian, speaking abominable English.*]

TRIGORIN

[*Setting down luggage*]: Delicious! Enchanting!

LEWIS

Eh? [*Swinging round*]: Who are you?

TRIGORIN

Please to repeat! [*Hums tune*]: But enchanting!

LEWIS

[*Eyeing him*]: Who are you? [*He leaves the piano.*]

TRIGORIN

[*Mopping forehead*]: Trigorin! Kiril Trigorin! [TRIGORIN *clicks heels and bows.* LEWIS *does the same.*] And you are, perhaps, a guest of Mr. Sanger? Ach! I also!

LEWIS

*Quel horreur!*

TRIGORIN

To whom have I the honour to address myself?

LEWIS

My name is Dodd.

TRIGORIN

Dodd! You are Mr. Lewis Dodd? Is it possible? The so gifted composer?

LEWIS

Yes—my name's Lewis.

TRIGORIN

But—but I am enchanted! [*Embraces* LEWIS *on both cheeks.*] For you I have long cherished the deepest admirings. I have heard your Symphony in Three

Keys, Mr. Dodd, and I am astonished. But it is a revolution in music, this Symphony! [*Walking round the room after* Lewis.] Always I take opportunity to hear your work. But how much pity it is so seldom perform! Do not, my dear sir, be too much despairing. If the peoples hate your music it is because you are so very great. I should not mind it if I were you.

Lewis

Thanks. I won't. For heaven's sake sit down!

Trigorin

You stay here before? But that is natural. You are already the dear friend of Albert Sanger.

Lewis

Am I?

Trigorin

But it is well known. And I! I also shall, perhaps, become the friend of this great composer. It is my hope. Already I have done some work for him. I have designed the Ballet for his Opera *Akbar*. He invites me to stay with him.

Lewis

Then I should certainly sit down.

Trigorin

This moment, you can imagine, my dear sir, is for me a very great one. I go to visit Mr. Sanger, I meet

Mr. Dodd. I find myself in the company of two most distinguished composers all in the one time. I am astonished.

LEWIS

H'm! Nothing to what you will be.

TRIGORIN

I must make my salutes to the family. It is a large family? Yes?

LEWIS

Well, yes. [*Smiling.*] Pretty big.

TRIGORIN

How many are now here?

LEWIS

Well, there's Madame. [*Indicates with his thumb over his shoulder the slumbering* LINDA.]

TRIGORIN

[*Cautiously peeping at her*]: Madame! You would say—Mrs. Sanger?

LEWIS

Yes, if you like. Then there's the children.

TRIGORIN

Many children?

LEWIS

Dozens!

TRIGORIN

*Tiens!* And all the children of Madame?

LEWIS

No! Not all. Only one.

TRIGORIN

Then the rest—they have had another mother?

LEWIS

Several!

TRIGORIN

*Par exemple?*

LEWIS

He collects children without meaning to. They're not all here. There isn't room.

TRIGORIN

Perhaps I should now go and make my salutes to him.

LEWIS

[*Going back to piano*]: Better not. I doubt if he'll see any one just now. He's ill!

TRIGORIN

Ill! But I had not heard. What——

LEWIS

Drink.

TRIGORIN

Ach so! [*Stares thoughtfully at* LEWIS, *who is writing at the piano.*] Then to whom shall I salute myself?

LEWIS

Wait till I've finished this. Then I'll call Kate. [*Plays a few chords.*] She's the eldest; she runs the house. [*Plays*]: Nice girl, Kate! [*Hums*]: "On this maid . . . untimely slain"——

TRIGORIN

What is it, this composition?

LEWIS

Just a little charade I'm writing for the children to act on Sanger's birthday. We call it Breakfast with the Borgias. Anything more you'd like to know?

[TESSA *and* PAULINA *run in from the mountain.* TESSA *is nearly seventeen.* PAULINA *is fifteen.*]

CHILDREN

[*Calling off*]: Lewis! Lewis!

LEWIS

Here are some of them.

TRIGORIN

Please?

LEWIS

Two of Sanger's children.

TESSA

Oh, Lewis! Haven't you finished it yet?

PAULINA

Let me see. Let me see.

LEWIS

How can I finish anything in this menagerie? I've got enough done for rehearsal after supper.

TESSA

[*At piano, reading off melody with one finger*]: It's nice! A very nice little tune. Clever Lewis!

PAULINA

[*In a loud whisper, pointing to* TRIGORIN]: Who's that?

[TRIGORIN *makes a low bow.*]

LEWIS

*That* is a visitor.

TESSA

I know. Sanger got a letter to say he was coming. And you should hear how he goes on about it. He says he never——

LEWIS

Come and be introduced! Mr. Trigorin—Miss Teresa Sanger. Miss Paulina Sanger. [*To* TESSA *who is hopping about on one leg*]: Make your curtsey, my cherished one! [*To* TRIGORIN]: She's the pick of the bunch though she doesn't look it.

TRIGORIN

[*Who has been bowing all the time*]: I am most delight——

PAULINA

You've brought a lot of luggage? Are you staying long?

TRIGORIN

It is permitted?

PAULINA

No. It isn't unless you can eat bacon. That's all there is in the house. Are you a Jew?

TRIGORIN

[*Offended for the first time*]: No, I am from Russia.

PAULINA

Well, there are Jews in Russia, aren't there?

TRIGORIN

They are not as I.

PAULINA

Really? How dreadful for them, poor things. But you shouldn't despise Jews. Our sister Antonia has a great friend who's a Jew. His name's Jacob Birnbaum, but we call him Ikey Mo. He owns fifteen theatres.

LEWIS

[*Who has been going over the music with* TESSA *at the piano*]: He's an art patron, so you'll like him, Trigorin.

TESSA

But Lewis! We can't rehearse to-night without Tony.

PAULINA

My sister Antonia has run away. [*To* TRIGORIN]: She's been gone for nearly a week.

TESSA

Sanger's quite annoyed about it. He says he'll belt her soundly when she gets back.

PAULINA

And Linda says——

LEWIS

Linda is—er—Madame.

PAULINA

—if Tony gets into the habit of going off like this, it's odds she'll be bringing him home a grandchild one of these days.

TESSA

Sanger says that she can take herself off for good if she does for there's too many to keep in our family as it is.

LEWIS

He doesn't mean half he says.

TESSA

That's true. He's always saying he's going to send Lina and me to school. But nothing ever comes of it.

PAULINA

He says modern education's the devil.

TESSA

[*Correcting her*]: My eye and Betty Martin.

LEWIS

[*Lighting a very disreputable clay pipe*]: He'll send you one day, as a matter of fact.

TESSA and PAULINA

No, he won't.

LEWIS

He will. I've been talking to him. I told him that the house will be ever so much quieter when you are safely under hatches.

TESSA

Lewis. You dirty dog!

PAULINA

We shall run away.

TESSA

We'll murder the governesses for their money, marry an earl disguised as the bootblack and get put in all the newspapers.

PAULINA

Anyway, we're much too old.

LEWIS

Not at all. All nice little girls are shut up till they're thirty-five.

TESSA

We aren't nice little girls. And it's too late to turn us into it. What about this rehearsal? It's only three days to Sanger's birthday, and he'll hate it unless it's properly done.

PAULINA

Tony is a wretch to run away.

LEWIS

We can do a good deal without her. Mr. Trigorin can help. He dances in a ballet.

PAULINA

[*Laughing*]: Well, I've heard of dancing elephants.

TRIGORIN

Ah, no! I imagine—I make steps for the ballet.

LEWIS

Well, then, you'll have to sing.

TRIGORIN

Ach, I cannot sing.

LEWIS

Oh, but you must. Everybody here has to sing. [*Plays a note on the piano*]: Sing that!

TRIGORIN

Please to excuse. I cannot.

LEWIS

Sanger expects all his guests to sing.

[TRIGORIN *produces so reedy a voice that* TERESA *and* PAULINA *roll on the ground with laughter.* LINDA *comes in from the verandah.*]

LINDA

For the love of heaven, stop that noise. That's the second time you've woke me up. Where's supper?

LEWIS

Mr. Trigorin—Mrs. Sanger!

LINDA

How do you do, Mr. Trigorin. We knew you were coming. Kate's been getting a room ready.

TRIGORIN

[*Kissing her hand*]: Please! You are too kind to me.

LINDA

Not at all, Mr. Trigorin. I'm sorry Albert's so poorly. [*To* LEWIS]: He's been working himself up into a state about Tony. Says it's all my fault. I tell him if he wants those girls of his minded properly he should put 'em to school somewhere.

TESSA

Just let him try. That's all!

LINDA

Nobody spoke to you. S'matter of fact, no decent school would keep you for a week.

PAULINA

[*Looking out of window*]: Here's Ikey Mo, looking as if he'd lost a shilling and found a smell. [*Leans out.*] Hullo, Ike! Are you escaping from a Pogrom? [JACOB BIRNBAUM *comes in, looking rather sheepish.*]

LINDA

Why, *Mister* Birnbaum! You are a stranger. Where've you been all this long time?

JACOB

In München. How is Sanger? Is he better?

LINDA

Much the same. Mr. Birnbaum—Mr. Trigorin! You don't know where Tony is, I suppose?

JACOB

[*Confused*]: Tony? She is not here then?

LINDA

She's been on the tiles for a week. Run away. We thought perhaps you'd know something about it.

JACOB

I? I? How should I?

TRIGORIN

[*Bewildered*]: A young lady is lost?

LINDA

No child of mine, I'd have you to know. One of Albert's.

TESSA

We're none of us her children, Gott sei dank!

[TESSA *and* PAULINA *are sitting on the steps combing their hair with a very dirty and broken comb.*]

LEWIS

Tony will turn up, you see. These children always fall on their feet.

LINDA

[*Muttering*]: Not so much of a child, either. Going on eighteen, the dirty little cat!

LEWIS

You sleeping here to-night, Jacob? It looks as if there's going to be a crush. I'm going to see Kate and bag my bedroom.

[LEWIS *goes out into the kitchen calling for* KATE.]

LINDA

D'you like the Tyrol, Monsieur Trigorin? What do you think of this view?

TRIGORIN

For me, Madame, you make it perfect. [*He bows.*]

LINDA

[*Flirtatiously*]: Flatterer! Let me show it to you from the meadow.

TRIGORIN

Enchanted—*gnadige Frau.*

TESSA

The last person who went star-gazing with Linda found himself on the mat next morning. Sanger is jealous of views.

LINDA

Tessa! Go and wash your face. And you might find your little sister and wash hers, too.

TESSA

Where is my little sister?

LINDA

I'm sure I don't know. Find her. [*Archly*]: Now I shall put you to the test, Monsieur Trigorin, or have you changed your mind?

TRIGORIN

*Mais non.* [*Hesitating.*] Mr. Sanger? Perhaps he would see me now? Yes?

LINDA

I shouldn't disturb him now. You'll only get your head bitten off. Perhaps he'll come down for supper. [LINDA *and* TRIGORIN *stroll out on to the mountain.*]

JACOB

[*Who has been trying through* LEWIS'S *MS. at the piano*]: Sanger will see me, I think. I have a little present that may be welcome. [*Produces a bottle.*] Cognac!

[JACOB *goes upstairs and knocks at* SANGER'S *door. A roar inside bids him enter. He goes in.*]

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PAULINA

Awful the way Sanger asks people and then forgets about it. He was furious about this man coming. He says he won't stir out of his room till he's gone.

TESSA

Linda seems to like the look of him.

PAULINA

That's a pity. If nobody took any notice of him at all, then perhaps he'd go away quite soon.
[LEWIS *and* KATE *come out of kitchen talking.*]

LEWIS

He looks for all the world like a trainer of performing fleas. And that's what he is, practically. A ballet master! Linda seems to admire the cut of his coat.

KATE

But he must sleep somewhere. Of course the spare room has two beds——

LEWIS

No, Kate. I'll sleep on the doorstep, but not with the flea trainer.

KATE

The house is so full! Of course there's the big cowshed. But it's never been disinfected since Tessa had scarlet fever there last autumn.

LEWIS

Tessa's germs will never hurt me. I'll sleep there.

KATE

[*Looking at suitcases*]: Are these his? [*Picks one up and staggers toward staircase.*] O-oh, what a weight!

LEWIS

He's got all his lounge suits and whatnots.

TESSA

Lewis! Lazy bones! Take them for her.

LEWIS

What? Carry the flea trainer's bags? Not I!

TESSA

[*To* PAULINA]: What a little ray of sunshine he is! Always so pleasant and helpful about the house! Such an example for us, Lina. We don't need to go to school to learn manners.

LEWIS

[*Pulling* TESSA's *ears*]: You lop-eared rabbit.

KATE

Never mind. I'll call Roberto.

LEWIS

[*Grasping bags*]: Oh, I'll take them. [*He staggers.*] My God, what's he got in here—cobble-stones?

PAULINA

Oddsbodikins, Tessa! You turn that man round your little finger, so you do!

TESSA

[*Complacently*]: That's what's called womanly tact.

PAULINA

O-oh! Kirschen! Let's stuff.

[TESSA *takes a little basket of cherries from the window seat. She and* PAULINA *sit on the dais step, eating.* ANTONIA *sidles in and sits down between them. She snatches a cherry.*]

TESSA

Tony! You back! Wherever have you been?

TONY

[*Mumbling her cherry*]: Oh—in München.

PAULINA

München!

TESSA

Where on earth did you stop? Not—not with Ikey Mo?

[ANTONIA *nods and spits out her stone.*]

TESSA and PAULINA

Himmel!

[SUSAN *is seen peeping through the window.*]

PAULINA

Did you have a nice time?

TONY

[*With a swaggering, jerky defiance*]: O-oh yes! A lovely time. Anything I wanted, Ike got for me. Last night we had a Vol-au-vent, and lobsters, and an iced bomb, and Ike had a saddle of mutton as well. And we had champagne. I was drunk every night.

TESSA

No wonder he's so fat if he eats all that.

TONY

So I told him. I said so in a restaurant once, at the top of my voice, in seven languages, so that all the people heard.

PAULINA

Why did he ask you to stay with him if you were so rude?

TESSA

Yes. What—— [*Catches sight of her sister's face.*] Tony! You'd never let him be your lover! [*Distressed.*] Oh, Tony, you didn't!

TONY

Yes, I did. And do you know, he says I've got the loveliest voice he's ever heard. He says I sing much better than Kate.

TESSA

Then he's mad. Because no sane man, even if he was your lover, could think that you sing better than Kate. And you're mad too, Tony. However could you? He's so fat!

TONY

What of it? There's no law that I know of that the first lover anybody takes has to be thin.

TESSA

No—no. [*Pause.*] What on earth will you say to Sanger?

TONY

Nothing. Sanger never asks questions unless he thinks he's going to like the answer. It'll be all right. He'll be in a good temper because Ike's brought him a present of some cognac. That was my bright idea.

TESSA

That'll be no use. Sanger's on the water wagon. The doctor says he'll die if he doesn't take care. So if you start him drinking again, you'll be a murderess. Did Ike give you that hat?

TONY

Certainly not. I bought it with my birthday money. Do you like it?

TESSA

It's rather vulgar, but it suits you.

PAULINA

You'll have a hell of a time with Sanger.

TESSA

[*Crushingly*]: Did you go walking all about München with that enormous hole in your stocking?

TONY

Ike gave me stockings. He gave me twelve pairs; silk, and all different colours.

TESSA

Fancy taking clothes from Ike!

TONY

I didn't! I said, "If I'm not grand enough for you in these clothes, I'll go home." So I threw his old stockings out of the window. They got caught in the telegraph wires and waved about like little flags. I laughed till I nearly fell out of the window.

PAULINA

Liar!

TONY

It's true. Ike pretended he wouldn't mind if I threw all my clothes out the window. He said I should look wonderful with nothing on.

TESSA

Well, so you do.

TONY

All the same he was quite annoyed. He couldn't bear to see his wonderful money wasted, the dirty pig of a Jew.

TESSA

But, Tony, if you hate him so, why——

PAULINA

Yes, why——

TONY

[*Collapsing into sudden tears*]: Oh, I don't know. I don't know.

[KATE *and* LEWIS *return down the stairs.* TONY *at the sight of them checks her tears and turns her back.*]

KATE

Tony! There you are! Where have you been?

TONY

Just visiting. Grüss Gott, Lewis.

LEWIS

Grüss Gott, Tony.

KATE

Father's very angry. He'll want to know—— Hadn't you better tell me? [*She looks searchingly at her sister, and sighs deeply*]: Oh well, I'll get supper. [KATE *goes into the kitchen.*]

LEWIS

Hope I sha'n't have to assist at the spanking. Where's Ike? Has he gone up to Sanger? I want him to act in Breakfast with the Borgias.

[LEWIS *goes to piano and plays.* PAULINA *goes and hangs over his shoulder. Stopping*]: Oh, go away, Paulina. You're blowing down my neck.

TONY

Oh, finish it, Lewis.

LEWIS

I can't. It's too difficult.

TESSA

Well, I must say I've heard it better done.

[*He swings round on his stool and looks at her.*]

LEWIS

I'll go and get the rest of the music.

[*He goes.*]

TONY

He didn't like you saying you'd heard the Appassionata better done.

TESSA

Well, he shouldn't say it was too difficult in that silly voice. It was just to show off.

TONY

I wish he wouldn't look at a person as if he saw in a second all that had happened to them.

TESSA

It means nothing. He only thinks of his own concerns. The other things he forgets so they sha'n't get on his mind.

[ROBERTO *comes in with hot plates, vegetables, etc., followed a second later by* KATE *with dish.* LEWIS *reappearing.*]

LEWIS

Roberto, you sing, don't you?

ROBERTO

Scusi?

TESSA

You should hear him lay breakfast in the mornings.

PAULINA

He's a tenor.

LEWIS

Good. Then he's Cæsare Borgia. [*Gives* ROBERTO *score.*]

ROBERTO

Pronto!

LEWIS

Directly after supper, I'll give you your tunes, and you must learn the words.

KATE

[*Laying the table*]: Come along! Supper's ready.

LEWIS

Is Sanger coming down?

KATE

I don't think so. I wish I knew what to do about him. He gets queer giddy turns, like Tessa used to get, and he says it's because he's thirsty. I'm sure he's iller than he thinks. Ring the bell, Tony!

TONY

[*Ringing a large cow-bell*]: Can't Ike be Pope? He'll look so like it.

KATE

[*Serving out food while* TESSA *cuts up bread*]: Where's Linda?

LEWIS

With her new fancy man, the flea trainer.

KATE

Ssh!

TESSA

Lewis has such a nice way of putting things.

LEWIS

He'll do for the Pope. We'll make him sing again. Fetch him in, Tessa.

TESSA

[*Goes to door, sees something distasteful, and turns back to speak with a changed voice*]: They are coming up the path now.

[*Enter* LINDA *and* TRIGORIN *rather guiltily.*]

LINDA

You don't mean to say that supper is actually ready? Whatever happened, Kate? You sit beside me, Mr. Trigorin. Oh! [*To* TONY]: So you've come back?

TONY

Yes. I've come back. Soup please, Kate!

LINDA

We mayn't ask where you've been, I suppose?

TONY

On a visit.

LINDA

Oh, really! Enjoyed yourself?

TONY

Very much, thank you.

LINDA

You never know. Sometimes girls don't enjoy themselves as much as they expect. Sometimes they come back quite—changed!

LEWIS

Hurry up, girls. I want to get on with this rehearsal. If only we had anyone to play for us!

TRIGORIN

I can play.

LEWIS

You? I doubt it! It's most vilely written.

TRIGORIN

Believe me I can play. So often I must read manuscript.

LEWIS

Well, you can have a shot at it. Kate! You're Lucrezia. This is your first air. [*Goes across to piano and plays it with his mouth full of food.*]

TONY

Oh, Lewis! Let me be Lucrezia. Kate can't act.

LEWIS

She can sing. I won't have my music spoilt.

LINDA

[*Speaking at the same time*]: Where's my baby? Where's Susan? Find her, you, Lina.

TONY

Kate's got no temperament.

PAULINA

[*Shouting at the same time*]: Soo-zanne!

LEWIS

Temperament is like vinegar in a salad, Tony. A little goes a long way.

PAULINA

Soo-zanne!

[SUSAN *comes in from the kitchen sucking her fingers.*]

KATE

Susie! You've been at the jam again! You'll be sick!

LINDA

Will you stop chipping at my child, Kate? It's none of your business.

TONY

[*Speaking at the same time*]: And I hope Kate spoils your play! Standing stuck in the middle of the stage like a sofa cushion! Kate as Lucrezia is the funniest thing I ever heard.

LEWIS

Trigorin as Pope will be funnier.

TESSA

A darling little temperamental Pope!

KATE

Has everyone got coffee?

SUSAN

Me, please.

LINDA

You're eating nothing, Mr. Trigorin!

TRIGORIN

I listen. It is entrancing. Such youth Such vitality! It is exquisite! [*Uncomfortable pause.*]

PAULINA

Pass the pickles, Lewis. Don't eat 'em all yourself.

TESSA

Is Sanger never coming? Let's chant him.

[*They call for* SANGER *to the tune of the Volga Boat Song.* ROBERTO *changes the plates.* JACOB *appears at the head of the stairs with hand raised for silence.*]

JACOB

He is not coming. He says he is not hungry. He wishes to finish the first act of his new Opera.

TONY

Also the new bottle of cognac.

LINDA

Hold your tongue, Mrs. Impudence. You wait till your father lays hands on you! We'll see.

[*A roar of "Shut that door!" from* SANGER'S *room.* JACOB *shuts door and comes downstairs. He sits down beside* TONY, *who moves to the other side of the table.*]

TRIGORIN

There is no privilege which I have more desired than to be a guest in this house. Alas! that I should not already greet my lovely, distinguished host.

LINDA

[*On the war path*]: Tony came back same time you did, Jacob. Did you by any chance travel together?

SUSAN

She's been stopping with 'im. I heard her telling Tessa and Lina. Ah-ooh! Mammy! Tessa pinched me!

LINDA

[*Boxing* TESSA'S *ears*]: Will you leave the child alone? Come here, duckie, and tell your mother all you heard.

SUSAN

I was listening in the verandah.

KATE

[*To* TRIGORIN]: Have they told you about the dreadful landslide we had here last year——?

LEWIS

[*At the same time*]: Now that Tony's back we can have a full rehearsal to-night——

LINDA

Be quiet, Lewis, please. Kate! I wonder at you interrupting like that! Go on, dearie. What next?

SUSAN

I heard Tony say she'd been stopping at Ike's flat.

TESSA

Schinken, please, Lewis. A nice piece of lean.

LINDA

Will you be quiet, Tessa? [*To* SUSAN]: Yes, darling?

SUSAN

And she said Jacob said she looked best with nothing on.

TONY

She's a filthy little liar. I said nothing of the sort. Did I, girls?

TESSA and PAULINA

No!

LINDA

We'll see. I always said you were a slut by nature. [*To* TONY]: Your father shall hear every word of this. Every word!

JACOB

[*Rising angrily*]: Look here—Linda——

LINDA

You can't get round me, Jacob. It's disgusting. If Sanger has any self-respect he'll turn you off the place. Coming here as a friend, and then getting his girls into trouble. Why don't you clear off?

JACOB

I cannot explain to you.

LINDA

Explain!

SUSAN

Mummy, can I go and stay with Uncle Jacob too?

TRIGORIN

[*Going over to piano*]: I shall perhaps play now.

TESSA

Come along.

LEWIS

[*To* LINDA]: It's what I'm always telling Sanger. What else can be expected if he won't send them to school! Why don't *you* do something?

LINDA

[*Turning on him*]: You're a nice one to talk. Yes, and a nice one to associate with little kids like them, too. I don't know what's turned you so strict for, all of a sudden. You don't generally mind what you do, or other people either, for the matter of that. You're not fit to be let into any respectable house.
[TRIGORIN *begins to play.*]

LEWIS

That's quite right. I'm not. Bravo, Trigorin. That's very good. But don't play it as if it was Chopin. [TRIGORIN *plays much louder.* ROBERTO *approaches* LEWIS]: That's right. Yes, Roberto?

ROBERTO

Please. [*Shows score*]: No words?

LEWIS

We'll make 'em up later. Let me see—you've just poisoned Ludovico, because you think he's your rival —yes—— You'd better sing the word "Vittoria" over and over again. Capire? Vittoria? Vittoria! Vittoria!

ROBERTO

*Si, si! Ho capito!*

LEWIS

Now line up for your parts. Lucrezia! ]*Throws score at* KATE, *who is going out into the kitchen*]:

And two couples of lovers, Giulietta, Ludovico. [*Points to himself and* Tessa]: Scaramello and Bianca! [*Hands scores to* Birnbaum *and* Tony.]

Tony

Have I got to be in love with Ike? That's a tall order.

Lewis

Shut your eyes and don't look at him.

Tony

As long as I don't have to touch him——

Lewis

You'll play Bianca or you won't play at all. Now I want two pages. Lina can be one, but the other——

Linda

What about my baby? She can sing in tune. I don't see why she should be passed over.

[*While this altercation is going on,* Trigorin *is playing all the time,* Roberto *is clearing away,* Kate *has begun to make an omelette, and the rest are studying their parts in a fury of concentration.*]

Lewis

You can't sing, Sue, surely!

Susan

Yes, I can.

LEWIS

Oh, very well. Hop up on the stage with Paulina, and sing that opening duet. Let's see what you can do.

[PAULINA *and* SUSAN *run up on to the dais and begin to lay a small table there with any china they can catch up.*]

PAULINA

[*Sings*]: Coffee—sugar—butter—jam! [*Laying table.*]

SUSAN

[*Singing dolefully*]:

Dies Irae! Dies Illa
Solvet saeclum cum favilla.

PAULINA

Bacon, kidneys, haddock, ham!

SUSAN

Teste David cum sybilla.

PAULINA

Now cheer thee, my brother, why art thou depressed?

SUSAN

I'm saying a prayer for the soul of the guest.
For two have been doomed to the poison to-day,
The lovely Bianca, as fair as the May,
And brave Ludovico, so valiant and bold;

This morning they're merry. To-night they'll be cold.
[*She sings this with a good deal of facility but with several tenth-rate little tricks. The other children make sounds of disgust.*]

LEWIS

[*Interrupting*]: That'll do, monkey. Before I have that confounded little pipe in my Opera, I'll re-write the whole thing.

ROBERTO

[*With great zeal, breaking out suddenly*]: Vittoria! Vittoria! Vittoria!

LEWIS

Oh, damn you, Roberto! It's not time for that yet. Nobody's dead yet. Kate! Come and poison the sausage rolls. Get a move on.

KATE

[*At the stove*]: I can't. Father's omelette is just on the turn. [*She scrapes round the pan with a knife.*]

LEWIS

[*Tearing his hair*]: I ask you? Can anybody be expected to rehearse in this household?

KATE

Can't you skip my song and go on?

LEWIS

We'll have to. Here, Trigorin! You're the Pope. Come and sing this.

TRIGORIN

I have said. I cannot sing.

LEWIS

Well say it, then; I'll play.

[*Pushes* TRIGORIN *off the piano stool, and plays a few flourishes.* TRIGORIN, *looking much bewildered, climbs up on to the dais.* TESSA *and* PAULINA *jump up and put three hats on his head, one on top of the other, as a Papal crown. He sings in a quavering voice which breaks into a sort of falsetto at times.*]

TRIGORIN

Thrice crowned pontiff of the Church, I say
I *won't* have any murdered guests to-day.
Sforza shall live, and fair Bianca too.
The neighbours say we go too far. We do.
Some poison's here. [*Sniffs food.*]
Now can it be jam?
No, 'tis the rolls. [*Changes plates.*]
Aha! How brave I am!

PAULINA and SUSAN

[*Who are hiding under the table, poke their heads out and sing*]:

Oh, gentle Pope! Oh heart devout!
He'll catch it, when they find him out.

[KATE *takes* SANGER'S *omelette upstairs.* TRIGORIN *goes back to the piano. As soon as he has left the*

*dais,* BIRNBAUM *and* TESSA *come up and break into rapid Mozartian recitative.*]

TESSA

Oh, Scaramello! Hast heard the news?

JACOB

Some of it.

TESSA

The lady Bianca is to be poisoned this morning.

JACOB

Ah, misery! I love her.

TESSA

Cheer up! She scorns thee!

JACOB

I like to be scorn*ed.*

TESSA

Then thou deservest all that is coming to thee.

TONY

[*Interrupting*]: Hear, hear!

LEWIS

Be quiet, or I'll wring your neck.

JACOB

Oh, hard-hearted maiden, hast thou no pity? Two souls to-day must die,

TESSA

Two?

JACOB

Signor Ludovico is also to be poisoned this morning.

TESSA

It shall not be. I love him.

JACOB

All help is vain. Prepare to see thy lover die.

TESSA

It shall not be. I'll save him. [*Snatches roll from the plate and eats it.*]

JACOB

Hold, rash one!

TESSA

Too late.

JACOB

Then I'll go with thee. [*Begins to eat other roll.*]

TESSA

Ludovico!

JACOB

Bianca!

[*They fall to the ground and writhe.* LEWIS *and* TONY *rush in and wring their hands.*]

TESSA and JACOB

[*Singing*]:

Long I loved in secret and in vain,
Long I wept her coldness, her disdain;
Now by death our constancy we prove,
Oh, live remembering our hopeless love.

LEWIS

[*Singing, as he hangs over* TESSA]:

Oh, sight of woe! What ails my dear?

TESSA

[*Feebly*]: I die for thee, so drop a tear.

TONY

[*Rather rudely to* JACOB]: Oh, speak some comfort, Scaramel!

JACOB

[*Trying to take her hand which she will not give him*]: There is no comfort! Fare thee well!

LEWIS

[*Singing suddenly with so much fervour that they are all startled*]:

Unsay that doom, oh faithful heart!
What's life to me, if she depart?

SUSAN

Mummy, can I have some jam with this cake? It's so dry.

PAULINA

Ssh!

LEWIS

When thou art dead, the birds will stop their singing,
When thou art cold no sun will ever rise.
No more, no more the joyful day's upspringing
Shall bless these eyes.
When thou art in thy grave, the flowers blowing
Shall hang their heads and sicken in the grove,
Beauty will fade and wither at thy going,
My only love.

TESSA

[*Sings*]:

Ah, say not so! Another love will cheer thee,
The sun will rise as bright to-morrow morn,
The birds will sing, though I no longer near thee
Must lie forlorn.
When I am in my grave, the flowers blowing
Shall make thee garlands twenty times as sweet,
Beauty will live though I must sleep, unknowing,
Beneath thy feet.

[*There is a little pause when this is over. Everybody is impressed.*]

KATE

[*Who has been listening from the gallery, and now leans over*]: That's good.

LINDA

Too good, if you ask me.

PAULINA

[*Putting her head out from under the table*]: Do we come out now, Lewis? [*He does not reply. He kneels, looking at* TESSA, *who is zestfully pretending to be dead on the floor. A first shadow of horror has flitted over his face*]: When do we sing our bit and say it wasn't poison after all?

KATE

[*As he still doesn't answer*]: Lewis!

LEWIS

[*Coming to himself with a start*]: Oh, what! [*To* PAULINA]: Your bit? No. Not yet. We've got Tony and Ike's duet now. What are you dawdling for, you two? You must raise him a little, Tony.

TONY

I couldn't. It would need a steam crane.

JACOB

[*Begins to sing*]: Say a hapless death I die—— [TONY, *who has been supporting him, suddenly lets him fall with a bump so that he knocks his head on the floor. He starts up in a wild fury*]: *Der lieber almächtiger Gott!* But you shall pay for this!

TONY

I couldn't hold you up for ever.

JACOB

I am not insulted so easily. You shall pay. You shall remember that you are no more than a beggar, the child of a man who owes me——

TONY

That's right, Mr. Made-of-Money. Boast about it. I would if I were you. It's only your money that gets you any friends ever.

JACOB

It has brought me some things that I desired.

TONY

*Ach, schweinhund!* [*Slaps his face.*]
[TONY *runs out sobbing.*]

JACOB

She shall pay. She shall kneel to me. In the dirt! In the dust! Tony—Tony——
[*He pursues her.*]

TESSA and PAULINA

Tony! Tony! Ike! We've not finished. Come back!
[*They also run out.*]

LEWIS

[*Flinging down the score*]: That's torn it!

LINDA

Such a fuss about a little singing.

KATE

Tessa sang hers very nicely.

LINDA

Oh yes, sweetly pretty, I'm sure. We shall see *her* slapping somebody's face one of these days. You'd better be careful, Lewis.

LEWIS

I'll follow your example.

LINDA

What d'you—— This moonlight is quite remarkable. Come, Mr. Trigorin, let's get some fresh air. [ROBERTO *goes into kitchen.* SUSAN *trots after* LINDA]: It's time you were in bed, duckie. Trot along. See to her, Kate.

KATE

Very well. Go to bed, Susan. I'll come by and by.

TRIGORIN

[*To* LEWIS]: Perhaps you still need me.

LEWIS

No, go along. [*To himself*]: The moon is busy to-night.

TRIGORIN

Pardon?

LINDA

[*Sweetly*]: Shall we? The valley under moonlight is——

LEWIS

—quite remarkable!

[LINDA *stalks out furiously.* TRIGORIN *follows sheepishly.* SUSAN *goes upstairs.*]

LEWIS

[*To* KATE]: That's a brute of a woman! I wonder you put up with her!

KATE

[*Clearing table*]: What can I do? I can't turn her out.

LEWIS

It's awfully stupid, the whole thing.

KATE

How?

LEWIS

All this mess, and Linda, and the children not going to school; and now, Tony! I must speak to Sanger again. It can't go on. Something dreadful will happen.

KATE

I can't think there's worse that *could* happen.

LEWIS

Why! It might be *Tessa* next! [*Hastily*]: Or Lina or Soo-zanne! Awful!

KATE

I do my best.

LEWIS

Of course you do. Why won't Sanger face things? He's brave enough in music.

KATE

It's not the same thing. Why are *you* so worried all of a sudden?

LEWIS

I don't know. Of course we always knew, in a way, that this sort of thing was ahead. But I put off thinking about it. Those girls are being dragged through all the gutters in Europe. They don't know how to look after themselves. Sooner or later, some blackguard—— [*Breaks off in horror.*]

KATE

Perhaps it's because their mother was a lady. She ran away with Sanger, you know.

LEWIS

I don't know why the idea appals me so. The whole business is so grimy—and one can't help loving—liking those little girls, especially Tessa. She's such a little darling, you know, Kate.

KATE

[*Pursuing her own thoughts*]: My mother wasn't a lady, and so, perhaps, I'm tougher.

LEWIS

Yes, I suppose it's worse for Tessa.

KATE

Perhaps their grand relations in England would help.

LEWIS

Have they relations in England?

KATE

They have an uncle, I think. A schoolmaster or something at Cambridge College.

LEWIS

[*Smiling*]: Yes. Have you got his address?

KATE

Father has.

LEWIS

Then *I* shall write.

[KATE *goes out with tray.* LEWIS *wanders about, dreaming.* TESSA *steals downstairs and tries to get out on to the mountain unnoticed. There is bright moonlight outside, and the room is half in darkness, for* KATE *has taken the lamp.*]

LEWIS

[*Catching sight of* TESSA]: Hullo! Where are you off to?

TESSA

To look at the moon.

LEWIS

What are you creeping about like that for?

TESSA

I don't like disturbing you when you look like a broody hen.

LEWIS

You ought to be in your bed.

TESSA

Tony's crying in our bedroom. She often cries. It's no use my trying to go to bed till she's finished.

LEWIS

What is she crying for?

TESSA

That's a secret.

LEWIS

H'm! A pretty open secret.

TESSA

I suppose so. [*Pause.*] What do you think of it, Lewis? Are you shocked?

LEWIS

Don't you think one ought to be?

TESSA

He *is* rather fat, but Tony says——

LEWIS

My dear Tessa!——

TESSA

What?

LEWIS

Nothing! Only I think it's a pity. It's—it's beginning too soon. I don't like to see babes I've practically rocked in the cradle growing up this pace.

TESSA

Growing up isn't *very* nice.

LEWIS

It isn't. God help us.

TESSA

You believe in God then?

LEWIS

I suppose I do. Though I'm blest if I know what I mean when I say it.

TESSA

You don't mean—that God up there?

LEWIS

I don't. Do you?

TESSA

I'm very ignorant. If I was Roberto I'd be better off. He's been better taught than me; I wish I wasn't so ignorant.

LEWIS

[*Casually*]: At school now, you'd learn such a lot——

TESSA

That old story! Will you never stop talking of school? I've seen girls in schools. They have faces like suet puddings and they have to walk two and two. You don't really want me to have a face like a pudding, darling Lewis?

LEWIS

You couldn't have a face like a pudding, darling Tessa.

TESSA

But to shut us up with a crew of flats, who——

LEWIS

For your good! Believe me, for your good!

TESSA

For my good! To shut up a free person for their good! Suppose I took a fancy to look at the moon

and found myself shut up in a dormitory full of pudding faces?

LEWIS

Exactly. My theory is that it's a pity to go moon-gazing at your age. I suppose it's a symptom.

TESSA

What of?

LEWIS

The green sickness.

TESSA

That sounds very disagreeable!

LEWIS

Anything sentimental is disagreeable.

TESSA

Will they cure me of the green sickness at school?

LEWIS

They might. It couldn't anyhow land you into difficulties.

TESSA

Did they cure you of it at your school?

LEWIS

I never had it.

TESSA

Oh yes, you did. You've got it still. There's a pair of us.

LEWIS

I'm past praying for. But there's no saying what school mightn't do for you.

TESSA

But what would happen to me when I come out again? I sha'n't stay there all my life, I suppose.

LEWIS

You'll come out—a perfect lady.

TESSA

Will that be nice?

LEWIS

[*With a grimace*]: Very.

TESSA

Shall you like me when I'm a perfect lady?

LEWIS

When you come out, my girl, you'll turn up your nose at me and Ike and poor old Trigorin.

TESSA

Oh, no! Indeed I won't!

LEWIS

But you will. And a good thing too. I know. You'll live in a lovely house with a front door and a back door and all the usual offices. And you'll have it hot on Sundays, cold on Mondays, hashed on Tuesday, minced on——

TESSA

Have what?

LEWIS

Mutton, my cherished one. You can be sure of getting that. Lots and lots of it. Ladies do.

TESSA

Lewis! Don't tease. I sha'n't like it a bit.

LEWIS

Yes, you will. You may think you won't. But you will. You'll say: "Thank heaven I've escaped the low haunts of my youth. Do I remember a rapscallion fellow called Dodd who actually, *actually*, laughed at really serious things like mutton? What a lost sheep! What a disgrace to civilisation!"

TESSA

Idiot! Now listen. I may go to school. I'm beginning to see points in it. But if I do, I shall always, always be thinking of you. And when I come out, I shall come straight back to you. So there!

LEWIS

Lord save us! You mustn't do that! A sheer waste of a beautiful education! I've given you up, Tessa. see? [*Holds her away from him*]: You must learn to disapprove of me as quickly as possible, or you'll never prosper.

TESSA

It's unkind of you to say that when you know how much I love you. [*Passionately*]: Promise you won't forget us. I—we shall be so lonely, when we come out. We haven't any friends, you know, except you and Ike. You *must* stick to us.

LEWIS

Do you call Ike a friend?

TESSA

He's very fond of Tony really. He doesn't know himself how much—oh, Lewis, it's dreadful, when people make a mistake over a thing like that. When, perhaps, somebody is very fond of them and they don't realise it. When they don't see—when they don't see all that's waiting for them.

LEWIS

[*Restlessly*]: It's a confounded mistake ever to get fond of anyone, Tessa. Before one knows where one is one begins to get unselfish, and considerate, and—and—self-sacrificing, and—all those tiresome things.

TESSA

Oh well, I hope you'll remember that and not—go getting fond of any unnecessary people while Lina and I are away. Be as fond of us as you like, but don't——

LEWIS

Don't what?

TESSA

Get married, or be put in prison or die or anything.

LEWIS

I'll try not to.

TESSA

Say "cross-my-heart-hope-I-may-die-if-I-don't."

LEWIS

Cross-my-heart-hope-I-may-die-if-I-don't.

TESSA

Bless me! I wish I could take you to school with me. However!

LEWIS

It's no use making plans, Tessa. You enjoy yourself and grow fat, and I'll try to keep out of mischief. That's a bargain. [*Makes as though to kiss her and then draws back*]: Good-night, my dear. [*Pats her head and*—Exit.]

[TESSA *hums, "Ah, say not so, another love will cheer thee"—hears voices and hides behind piano.*

LINDA *and* TRIGORIN *steal in from the moonlight. As they appear in doorway* TRIGORIN *seizes her hand and covers it with kisses.*]

TRIGORIN

[*Seizing her hands and kissing them*]: —*Je t'adore*——

LINDA

[*With a heavy smile at him*]: Bless you! Now we must go to bed. Good-night! [*He looks at her, and then kisses her*]: Ssh! Not here! Wait!

TRIGORIN

*Restez! Restez donc, mon ange!*

[LINDA *glides out of his arms and upstairs and pauses on the landing.*]

LINDA

Good-night, Mr. Trigorin.

[*She goes into room, leaving door slightly ajar.* TRIGORIN *sighs deeply and follows her. The door shuts.*]

TESSA

[*Emerging and talking to herself*]: Beasts! Beasts! [*She turns back and notices* LEWIS' *yellow muffler lying on the piano. She takes it in her hands and folds it round her neck lovingly. Then she looks after* LEWIS, *overcome with sadness. Suddenly she buries her head in the end of it and speaks*]: I wish

I could die! Oh, I wish I could die! [*Just then there are sounds of heavy stertorous breathing from* Sanger's *room. She stops, petrified with terror*]: *Himmel!* What's that? [*There is a groan, and the sound of a dog whining at* Sanger's *door.*] Lewis! [*She runs upstairs calling*]: Lina! Tony! Tony! Lina! [Tony *and* Paulina *come on in their nightgowns at top of landing.*]

Tony

What is it?

Tessa

There's a funny noise in Sanger's room. He must be ill.

[*The groaning continues.*]

Paulina

I'm frightened.

Tony

It's nothing. He's just snoring.

Tessa

Ssh! Keep quiet! Listen. [*Pause.*] We ought to go in.

Paulina

He'll beat us if we do.

Tony

Why not get Linda. She doesn't mind annoying him.

TESSA

No, no, we can't. She—she's got somebody in there. [*All the children stare with frightened eyes at* LINDA's *door.*]

TONY

That's Wotan howling. Why doesn't Sanger tell him to shut up?

TESSA

Hush! It's stopped. I'm going in. I don't care if there is a row. Will you come, Tony? [TONY *draws back.* TESSA *goes in—she reappears very soon*]: He's fallen. Wotan won't let me go near him. [*The* CHILDREN *stir*]: It's no use. I think he's dead. [*The* CHILDREN *begin to cry loudly.* LINDA *appears in her door with a candle.* TESSA *puts her arm round the others*]: Go away. Go away. He's dead! [*She stands guard over the door and won't let* LINDA *in. Screaming hysterically*]: Lewis! Lewis! Please come quickly!

QUICK CURTAIN

## ACT ONE

### Scene II

Scene—*The Karindehütte, a summer morning some weeks later.*

[Florence *is arranging flowers in a jug on the table.* Lewis *is holding a basket and handing her flowers one by one.* Teresa *and* Paulina *are sitting on the stairs gloomily watching them.*]

Lewis

And what will you do with this pretty thing? [*Holds up a gentian.*]

Florence

Oh, that? Put it on one side. We'll have all the tall flowers in a jug, and the little ones in a dish. And the primula shall go in the middle of the table, don't you think, Mr. Dodd?

[Linda, *half dressed, comes out in the gallery.* Florence *does not see her, and* Lewis *waves her back with a fierce gesture. She shrugs her shoulders and goes.*]

LEWIS

I do indeed. Tessa! Why did we never have a primula in the middle of the table before?

TESSA

[*Coldly*]: Because we never wanted one.

FLORENCE

And we need a large, low dish for the gentians. Do you think these infants can find us one?

LEWIS

Girls! Find a large, low dish.

TESSA

Lina! Find a large, low dish.

PAULINA

Find one yourself.

LEWIS

You can both of you find one. Skip along and look lively.

TESSA

[*Getting up*]: Come, Lina! What sort of dish, Florence?

FLORENCE

Anything! A pie dish! Perhaps I'd better show you. Will you be sorting out the gentians, Mr. Dodd?

[*She goes out with* Tessa *and* Lina *into the kitchen.* Susan *comes out of* Linda's *room and downstairs.*]

Susan

Kate! Ka-ate!

Lewis

[*Turning basket upside down on table*]: Damn it all! Which are gentians?

[Kate *comes in from outside.*]

Kate

Yes, what is it? Don't make that noise.

Susan

Mammy's getting up, and she wants 'er breakfast.

Kate

Well, then, take it up to her. It's all ready in the kitchen. And you can tell her to fetch her own meals after this. I'm through. The sooner she takes herself off and you too the better pleased we shall be.

Lewis

That's my baby, Kate.

Susan

I'll tell 'er every word you say.

[*She goes upstairs.*]

LEWIS

Round 'em up, Kate!

KATE

Well, it's high time she went. She upsets the whole place. And that Trigorin always in and out of her room.

LEWIS

Put him in Linda's room for good and all.

KATE

Oh, I couldn't do that, could I? It'd hardly be decent, and poor father not dead a month.

LEWIS

It'd keep him out of the other rooms, anyway.

KATE

The house is simply upside down. What with the visitors and then Tessa and Lina: you know they've been sick off and on ever since that awful night.

LEWIS

Nobody could live in this house and not know how sick Tessa and Lina have been off and on.

KATE

I wish Jacob would come back.

LEWIS

Just now you wanted to be rid of us.

KATE

I'm so horribly worried about Tony's future.

LEWIS

Her future is perfectly obvious. Ike might have thought of that before.

KATE

Oh, Lewis! As if you men ever did. [*Going into the kitchen*]: Well, I suppose you all expect dejeuner?

LEWIS

Please, dear Kate!

[BIRNBAUM *comes in from the mountain.*]

Hullo, Ike! Talk of the devil. I thought you'd fled to Vienna.

JACOB

Only for a few days' business. I return as soon as possible. I wish to see the English uncle who has come. The Herr Doktor Churchill von Cambridge. I have already written to him. I have offered [*impressively*] money, for these poor children.

LEWIS

Why?

JACOB

[*Hesitating*]: I have loved their father.

LEWIS

[*Dryly*]: I see.

JACOB

[*Breaking out*]: You will say that I have also loved the daughter? But what can I do? She detests me. I have offered marriage to her, and she will not listen.

LEWIS

Marriage! Ike! You're drunk. Nobody ought to get married.

JACOB

But no, I am not drunk. I wish that I were drunk. I have loved this beautiful child. I have made a great mistake. I have wished to buy her. She came to München trusting to me. Too late I have discovered that love cannot be bought. I have been mad. Since she will not love me, I must be sure that she is in good hands.

LEWIS

That'll be all right. They're going to take her to England with her sisters.

JACOB

[*With a sigh*]: And she will be happy there?

LEWIS

Miss Churchill says so. The daughter of the English uncle. She's here too, you know.

JACOB

The daughter? Ach so! And she will be good to my Tonya? What is she like?

LEWIS

[*With a grimace*]: Most—distractingly—beautiful.

JACOB

Beautiful? [*Stares at* LEWIS.] I think it is a pity that you stay here then. With beautiful women, you are not always wise. When you are writing, as now, it would be safer that you should live in a monastery.

[*A loud yell upstairs.*]

LEWIS

I've been trying to go all the week. Ever since she came.

[SUSAN *comes downstairs again screaming and crying.*] What's the matter now?

SUSAN

Ah—ooo—mammy—hoo—hoo—boxed my—hoo—hoo—'cos I told 'er—hoo—hoo—what Kate said—hoo—ho—hoo!

[SUSAN *goes howling into the kitchen as* CHARLES, *distracted, bursts out of the music room.*]

CHARLES

What? What? Who's hurt? Oh! [*Seeing* SUSAN *going out*]: That child again! Good heavens! How much longer is this going on?

JACOB

[*Clicking heels and bowing*]: *Bitte Sehr!*

CHARLES

Who's this? *Another* of Sanger's friends called for payment, I suppose?

LEWIS

Mr. Birnbaum, Dr. Churchill!

CHARLES

[*A little more cordially*]: Oh, how d'ye do! You wrote to me, didn't you? And offered to help. Glad to see you.

LINDA

[*Bawling off stage*]: Ka-ate! Roberto!

CHARLES

There she goes again! Look here—Dodd, it's time we got rid of this creature—this Linda. How does one shake women off?

LEWIS

She won't go till she's thrown out.

JACOB

She will not go?

CHARLES

She had a nervous breakdown the day we arrived, and she's kept her bed ever since.

LEWIS

And poor old Trigorin has to act as nurse.

CHARLES

It hasn't occurred to *him* to go away either. I never saw such people.

JACOB

I have the idea. You send Trigorin away and she will go too. He is her only hope.

LEWIS

Now, why did I let Ike think of that first?

JACOB

Tell him quite plainly that he must go. He will not mind. He is very amiable. Tell him now.

[*Enter* TRIGORIN, *rather sheepishly, carrying a breakfast tray up to* LINDA].

*Auf wiedersehen, Trigorin!*

TRIGORIN

Please?

JACOB

Good-bye!

TRIGORIN

But I am not going!

LEWIS

I'm afraid you are!

TRIGORIN

[*Looking from one to the other*]: *Quel dommage!*

LEWIS

There's too much of a crowd. Now Birnbaum's arrived, the English lady has to sleep in your room. It's true there are two beds, but she mightn't like the idea of sharing it with you.

TRIGORIN

[*Bewildered*]: You wish that I should go?

JACOB

We are all going, Trigorin. The house must be sold. The Herr Doktor wishes to take his nieces to England.

TRIGORIN

I understand. It is better that I go. But first I will wish to give £500 to you, sir [*To* CHARLES]: for the eatings and clothings of these so helpless orphans. [*Takes out a pen and cheque book.*]

CHARLES

Really—bless my soul—that's very good of you.
[LINDA *comes on to the balcony, half dressed.*]

LINDA

Where's that Kate?

LEWIS

Busy doing your work. What do you want?

LINDA

I'll teach her to send saucy messages by my own daughter, the double-faced hussy. Where's Roberto? Isn't he ever going to bring me anything to eat?

LEWIS

I shouldn't think he is.

LINDA

Nobody spoke to you! Kiril! That you, my precious? Linda's hungry!

TRIGORIN

[*Busy writing cheque*]: In a moment, *chérie.* I make arrangements for my departing.

LINDA

Your departing? What d'you mean?

TRIGORIN

[*Nervously, as he writes*]: I go to Vienna—a telegram has come—I arrange a new ballet——

LINDA

You're going?

LEWIS

In a very few minutes, dear Linda. He's got to catch the midday express to Vienna.

LINDA

[*With instant determination*]: So have I.

LEWIS and JACOB

[*In feigned astonishment*]: You?

LINDA

Yes! Me! Think I don't know when I'm not wanted? Oh, I've seen how you've been scheming to turn me out of the place ever since the night poor Albert was taken. I'm not the sort to demean themselves by staying after those sort of insinuendoes. 'Smatter-er-fact I've had my boxes ready packed for some days. Roberto can fetch 'em down. [*Bawling*]: Roberto! Roberto! Kate!

LEWIS

Been awaiting her marching orders?

[ROBERTO *runs in from kitchen.*]

ROBERTO

Si, Signora—si, si, si, si, si!

LINDA

Come up here!

[*She disappears and* ROBERTO *goes up.*]

LEWIS

[*Triumphantly*]: And that's that!

[FLORENCE, KATE, TESSA *and* PAULINA *come in from the kitchen.* TESSA *and* PAULINA *are slightly ahead of the others,* TESSA *has the pie dish.*]

TESSA

Here's your large, low dish. It was full of gooseberries. Took us some time to empty it.

PAULINA

Tessa did most of the emptying.

FLORENCE

What is it? Who was shouting, just now?

LEWIS

Linda is going.

TESSA

Loud cheers!

PAULINA

Let's all hang out flags!

TESSA

[*Capering*]: Oh day of joy! Oh day of gladness!

KATE

[*Going upstairs*]: If she really is going, I'll pack for her.

PAULINA

Let's go and see for ourselves!

[*They stampede upstairs and follow* KATE *to* LINDA'S *room.*]

TRIGORIN

[*Advancing on* CHARLES *and giving him cheque*]: Sir, it is to me the greatest privilege that I have stayed in this house. You will understand. I am desolated that Sanger die so soon. I pray to give you this little sum. I go now to make my trunks. I will no longer encumberate the bedroom of this gracious lady. [*He kisses* FLORENCE'S *hand and hurries out.*]

LEWIS

Come, Ike! We'll take his trunks for him! We'll see he don't miss his train.

[*They follow* TRIGORIN *in hoots of laughter.*]

CHARLES

[*Looking after them*]: What a set!

FLORENCE

I think it's all rather amusing!

CHARLES

When is that rapscallion Dodd going to take himself off?

FLORENCE

Now, sir. Don't be philistine. He has genius.

CHARLES

Maybe. So have a number of unpleasant people.

FLORENCE

You remember, I told you when we got his postcard. He wrote that marvellous Symphony in Three Keys that we heard in Dresden.

CHARLES

What of it? He looks no better than all the rest of the rag-tag and bobtail we found here. He looks worse. The rest, I can place. But he seems to have no nation—no ties—no class.

FLORENCE

No class? I've been wondering about that. I'm inclined to think that he's of quite humble birth, a peasant perhaps, but he's raised himself——

CHARLES

Women are inexplicable. Raised himself! He looks like a scarecrow. Your poor aunt! What a life she must have led.

[ROBERTO *comes downstairs with an enormous trunk on his back. He takes it outside, he is seen to fetch a wheelbarrow and to load it on to it.*]

FLORENCE

We can't know. Why should we assume that she was so very miserable? There must have been compensations in her lot. She wasn't hedged and bounded all her life by cultured mediocrity. Personally I can't imagine a better fate than to marry a really great man. To—to help him in his work.

CHARLES

Great Heavens, *you're* not falling in love with Dodd, are you? It was that sort of talk that led your aunt into marrying Sanger. I'm beginning to be sorry, my dear, that I brought you with me. But you would come.

FLORENCE

I'm not sorry. These people are a change. I'm tired of meeting clever young men.

CHARLES

You wouldn't find these Dodds and Guggenheims amusing if you met them in your own home. You mustn't be misled by the fact that they live on the top of a mountain.

[TERESA *and* PAULINA *run downstairs with long black veils on. They twirl about, greatly pleased with themselves.*]

TESSA

Don't we look lovely?

PAULINA

We thought we'd better go into mourning for Sanger. It'll look more decent down in the village.

FLORENCE

It looks quite absurd. Take those rags off at once. At once! I mean it.

[*Crestfallen they remove their veils.* ROBERTO *comes in and goes up again to* LINDA'S *room.*]

Where did you get them?

PAULINA

They're what Kate had when our mother died.

FLORENCE

I suppose you'll need an entire outfit before you go to school.

PAULINA

Well, we've no clothes. Only what we've got on.

TESSA

I'm not sure we shall like school.

FLORENCE

Of course you will. You'll learn how to play games.

TESSA

We know how to play games, thank you.

FLORENCE

But not English games. Do you play hockey? [*Strenuously*]: You all have wooden sticks and you hit a ball about a field; you run as fast as ever you can——

TESSA

I'm afraid we're rather old for that sort of game, thank you.

[ROBERTO *comes down with a hat box and a bird cage.*]

FLORENCE

Oh, no! In England the big girls all play. I loved my school. I never wanted to leave it. I was captain of my school hockey when I was eighteen.

[TESSA *and* LINA *look at each other and sigh.* TONY *comes in very pleased with life.*]

TONY

Thank Heaven. That's all right. I sha'n't have to go to school anyway. I'm going to be married.

CHARLES and FLORENCE

Married?

TONY

I'm going to marry Ike. I've just told him so. And wasn't he surprised. [*Bursts out laughing.*]

FLORENCE

*Who* are you going to marry?

TONY

Jacob Birnbaum! We call him Ike. That fat little Jew you saw just now.

FLORENCE

[*To* CHARLES]: What does she mean?

CHARLES

Well, well, well, well, well! We shall have to see about this.

PAULINA

I thought you said you hated him.

TONY

No, I never hated him. But I was dreadfully annoyed with him. In München he was so stupid.

TESSA

They're all stupid.

TONY

He ought to have waited.

TESSA

They don't seem to know how to wait.

TONY

He would keep boasting about all the grand things he was going to give me. I might have been Linda. He didn't seem to think that I could give him anything. He might have known I wouldn't have gone to München if I hadn't been really fond of him.

TESSA

If there was gold and silver spread under their noses they'd never see it. They're all as blind as bats. Ike's not the only one.

TONY

It's awful when two friends turn into enemies.

TESSA

But you were right to forgive him. They can't help being stupid. Only women understand things.

TONY

That's what I felt. And I can't bear to see him going about looking as if he had toothache. We've had it all out and forgiven each other. And now we'll be married. Because I don't want to go to England and—he—does need someone to look after him.

TESSA

Oh, Tony! You're lucky! You're lucky—you can. Some people see, and know—and—can't do anything.

[CHARLES *and* FLORENCE, *who have been holding a dismayed parley in the background, now descend upon* TONY.]

FLORENCE

But, Antonia. Please be more explicit. What is this man to you?

CHARLES

Do I understand that you've—er—lived with this fellow?

TONY

[*Apologetically*]: Only for a week.
[KATE *comes out on gallery.*]

KATE

Linda's lost a camisole. She says she won't go till it's found.

TESSA

Give her my two new chemises instead. They're on the line outside.

KATE

Will they fit her?

TESSA

Never mind. Stuff them in the bag. She won't notice.

KATE

If you don't mind—anything to get her out of this house. [*She comes down and goes out.*]

FLORENCE

This is like a nightmare.

TESSA

[*Consolingly*]: It's all right now. Really it is.

FLORENCE

Father! She mustn't be allowed to marry this man. He must be an incredible brute.

CHARLES

We must see! We must see!

FLORENCE

Poor little girl! We'll take you back to England and you must forget all about it.

TONY

[*Drawing back*]: No, no. I don't want to go away. I want to stay with Ike. I love him. Poor Ike!

FLORENCE

Love! That's not love, you poor little gipsy.

TESSA

[*Fiercely*]: Yes, it is.

FLORENCE

You're too young to know what you are talking about.

[ROBERTO *goes up again to* LINDA'S *room. The wheelbarrow is getting crazily full.*]

TESSA

No, I'm not. I'm not. We may be ignorant. But we can feel. We can feel as much as anybody.

FLORENCE

[*Helplessly*]: Father!

CHARLES

Now! Now! Now! We must go into the whole matter very carefully. [*To* TONY]: Can this fellow support you?

TONY

[*Vaguely*]: Oh yes, I expect so. He's rich. [JACOB *comes in.* FLORENCE *draws back from him in horror*]: Oh, Ike! I've been telling them.

JACOB

Ach so! [*Meets the stern eye of* CHARLES *and stiffens a little*]: It is true, sir. I ask for the honour of marrying your niece.

CHARLES

We must go into it.

JACOB

I can give her every luxury. She shall live like a princess—clothes—jewels—you shall see. I own fifteen thea——

TONY

Draw it mild, Ike. I thought I told you not to boast.

JACOB

Ach! It is no boast. You will see. Until now you have lived in poverty, a *wandervogel*, the child of a so obscure composer, but——

TONY

Don't talk about obscure composers unless you want a black eye. If you want to boast, say you knew Wanger.

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CHARLES

Can't we discuss this in private?

JACOB

*Ja, gewiss!* In here.

[JACOB *and* CHARLES *go toward music room.*]

FLORENCE

Do you want me, Father?

CHARLES

No, my dear.

[*He goes out with* JACOB. KATE *hurries upstairs with the chemises in her hand.*]

FLORENCE

[*Going to the window and looking out*]: I think I'll go out a little.

PAULINA

[*Starting forward*]: Shall we take you for a walk?

FLORENCE

No, no. I would rather walk by myself. [*She goes out on to the mountain.*]

TESSA

[*Shaking her head*]: Our stock's gone down. She doesn't like us nearly so well as she did at first. When she came I heard her telling her father we were delicious imps, but now——

PAULINA

I think it's an excellent idea you getting married, Tony. Couldn't we all marry someone? I'll marry Roberto. I'm sure he'll be quite pleased. He's very obliging.

TONY

Pooh! You're too young.

PAULINA

Juliet was younger than me when she married Romeo.

TONY

She was Italian.

PAULINA

So would I be Italian if I married Roberto. People always take their husband's nationalities.

TONY

Idiot! That's got nothing to do with it.

PAULINA

Tessa can ask Lewis. What's the matter, Tessa? I'd ask him myself, but he likes you best.

TESSA

[*Slowly*]: I'm too young.

PAULINA

You could ask him, anyhow.

TESSA

No, I couldn't. I'm too old.

PAULINA

Too old! I thought you said you were too young.

TESSA

I did. Dear me. I'm both. I'm at a perfectly horrid age. I'm too young for some things and too old for others.

PAULINA

Now you're blushing again! You're worse than Kate. At least she blushes at the same things. You've taken to blushing at nothing at all.

TESSA

[*Darkly*]: You wait till you're my age.

PAULINA

Why should you be too young for Lewis? You'd suit him better than any ordinary tiresome woman that would always be bothering him.

TESSA

Would I? Look. [*Pointing out of the window.*]

PAULINA

[*Looking out and giggling*]: Cousin Florence walking by herself!

[FLORENCE *and* LEWIS *wander past, absorbed in one another, picking flowers.*]

FLORENCE

Tell me! Why is that cow-bell sometimes A and sometimes A flat?

LEWIS

It's a different c-cow!
[*They pass on.*]

PAULINA

[*Strutting up and down*]: Oh, really! Fancy that! A different cow! Looking for its calf! [*Stopping anxiously*]: Do you think he wants *her?*
[*The three sisters draw together in consultation.*]

TESSA

We might have known, when first she came, that she was a serpent in sheep's clothing.

TONY

It started the very minute she got into the house.

PAULINA

With Lewis it's always so very—noticeable.

TESSA

He's stammering. He always stammers when he's in love.

PAULINA

But he wouldn't marry her. Think of all the others. He never married any of them.

TESSA

Yes. But she's a lady. If it's a lady they have to marry them. Look at Sanger and our mother.

TONY

Perhaps he'll go away before he has time to do anything silly.

TESSA

I do hope he will. Just think what she can do to him. She'll want to take him to England, to one of her sort of places. And she'll make him change his clothes and—— [*With a little cry*]: Oh—and he'll never get any work done!

PAULINA

She can't have seen him drunk.

TONY

Nor in a temper.

PAULINA

Do you think we ought to tell her?

TESSA

Tell her? What?

PAULINA

That he's not a suitable person to be her friend. There are heaps of things we could tell her.

TESSA

I can't.

PAULINA

Why not? If she knew——

TESSA

I don't know why not. I couldn't.

PAULINA

He belongs to us and she doesn't.

[FLORENCE *and* LEWIS *come into view. They stand absorbed, their heads close together, looking at some special flower they have picked.*]

TESSA

Perhaps she'll find out—in time. Everybody finds out, when it's too late. [*She cries.*]

PAULINA

There's no use crying about it. [*Cries too.*]

TONY

[*Sobbing*]: Have you got a hanky?

TESSA

Let's water this primula with our tears. It might change its colour or something.

[*They all bend sobbing over the primula on the table.*]

PAULINA

No use! My tears have stopped.

TESSA

They always do when you've got a use for them.

[TRIGORIN *staggers in with a couple of suitcases.*]

TRIGORIN

I come to go. But first I must make my farewell to the good Doktor. Greatly have I appreciate the privilege to meet this so learned man. So that I forget! I have not compliment him for that he is Sanger's brother-in-law.

TONY

[*With a grin*]: H'm. I doubt if that's wise.

TESSA

[*Examining flower*]: It hasn't made a bit of difference to the primula.

[TRIGORIN *knocks on the music room door, opens it and stands bowing.*]

TRIGORIN

[*Talking into the room*]: Sir! There has come to an end the most distinguished visit of my life.

[LINDA, *in deep mourning, appears in the gallery with* SUSAN, *who is also in black.* LINDA *holds* SUSAN'S *hand, and carries a battered old dressing case.* ROBERTO, *behind, carries some miscellaneous luggage.* KATE, *also in attendance, has her hands full.*]

PAULINA

[*Squealing*]: Oh! Oh! Oh, look!

TESSA

Oh! Lewis! Ike! Come and look! Did you ever?

[FLORENCE *and* LEWIS *come in from the mountain.* CHARLES *and* BIRNBAUM *come out of the music room.*]

LINDA

[*Taking no notice*]: Come along, my pet! If we're turned out, we're turned out, and there's an end of it.

[SUSAN *sniffs loudly.* TRIGORIN *stands petrified.*]

LINDA

[*To nobody in particular*]: She's crying for her daddy, poor little mite! You wouldn't think the way she's treated now that she was Sanger's favourite child! Come, dearie. You're going to a lovely new home with Uncle Kiki!

TRIGORIN

[*In horrified amazement*]: *Himmel!*

LINDA

[*Firmly*]: Will you take my dressing case, please, Kiril?

TONY

[*Darting forward*]: You mustn't take that. It's mine.

LINDA

What's yours? Yours? You give it here *if* you please! It's mine. I've had it these five years.

TONY

[*Snatching it and dodging behind* JACOB]: It ought to be mine. It belonged to my mother.

LINDA

What's that got to do with it? It's mine now. Your dad gave it to me. You give it back di-rectly.

TONY

I won't. You're a thief! He never gave you my darling mother's things. You stole them.

KATE

Hush, my dear!

TONY

I won't hush.

[*They all try to hush and restrain her.*]

JACOB

Tony! Tony! Let her have it! I will give you a better one. I will give you——

TONY

Thank you for nothing, Mr. Made-of-money! [*Holds up bag*]: Look! Those are my mother's initials. Evelyn Napier Churchill.

CHARLES

Yes, yes. It was hers. I remember. I gave it to my poor sister on her twenty-first birthday. But it must be quite worthless by now. Let this lady have it, my dear.

LINDA

[*Screaming*]: I don't leave this house without it. You call me a thief! What are you, I should like to know? You turn me out. You treat me as if I was a tart. What better are you? Tell me that! What better was your mother?

FLORENCE

[*Holding* TONY *back*]: Don't listen to her. Don't answer!

LINDA

Don't you worry with her, miss. She's not fit for you to touch, not by a long chalk. She's an artful little slut and no better than what she should be. You ask *Mister* Jacob Birnbaum here if——

LEWIS

[*Snatching bag while* JACOB *holds* TONY]: Here! take your bag and go! You'll miss your train!

CHARLES

[*Watch in hand*]: Yes, Madam. You'd really better go.

LINDA

[*At the door*]: Go? I should think I am going! I wouldn't stay here for anything in the world, not with all I've seen going on. But if you're so particular I wonder at you for bringing the young lady here. It's nothing better than a dirty case house and never was.

[*She goes.* TRIGORIN, *shamefacedly, follows her, dropping luggage about.* ROBERTO *brings up the rear with the overladen wheelbarrow. The whole party rush out to watch the exit—leaving* LEWIS, CHARLES *and* FLORENCE *alone.*]

FLORENCE

How devastating!

CHARLES

[*Grumblingly*]: Now perhaps I can get on with Sanger's bills. He seems to have vowed himself to poverty but not to chastity. Is there any ink about the place? My fountain pen's dry.

FLORENCE

[*Producing a dirty bottle off mantelpiece with cork of blotting paper and turning it upside down*]: Not a drop.

CHARLES

Then I'll have to go to the village too. The sooner we finish up and depart for a less rarefied atmosphere the better.

[*He goes out.*]

LEWIS

You mustn't, please, blame the children for all this. They're very young. She—er—they need someone to look after them.

FLORENCE

But that's obvious.

LEWIS

It isn't their fault—this house—and the way they've been brought up.

FLORENCE

Oh, I know. I understand. Don't apologise for them. I think they're dears, especially Paulina.

LEWIS

I hope they will like school. Some people can't do with that sort of life. I couldn't myself. I ran away from my school. And if they——

FLORENCE

[*Amused*]: How old were you?

LEWIS

Sixteen.

FLORENCE

Not really! Where did you go?

LEWIS

Spain. I played the cornet in a circus band.

FLORENCE

How delicious!

LEWIS

Afterward I wrote pieces for them to play. It's good training. Sanger says my style bears traces of the circus yet. [*Pause.*] He used to say, I mean. I keep on forgetting Sanger's dead.

FLORENCE

I adore circuses. They're so vital, aren't they?

LEWIS

Well! That's one way of putting it.

FLORENCE

Such a delicious gusto about them. My friend Peveril Leyburn once told me that whenever he has an attack of *Weltschmerz* he always goes to cure it by riding in the swing boats on Hampstead Heath. Do you know his little songs, by the way? They're rather attractive.

LEWIS

Never heard of 'em.

FLORENCE

Oh, but surely——

LEWIS

Nobody in England knows anything about music.

FLORENCE

[*Sweetly*]: Perhaps you think that because you've never lived there.

LEWIS

On the contrary. I know it's so because I have lived there.

FLORENCE

And you found nothing there to your taste?

LEWIS

[*Eyeing her*]: English things are very agreeable sometimes, as soon as they get out of England.
[*She turns away.*]
*When* are you going back? Very soon?

FLORENCE

As soon as everything is paid. [*Goes to the window*]: How peaceful it is! One can just hear the waterfall. Isn't running water the most enchanting sound in the world?

LEWIS

No. Wings are. [*Sits on table*]: When I was a boy I used to sleep on some cliffs in Cornwall. Once I woke up when it was quite dark. [*Low—almost to himself*]: I could see—nothing! But the air was full of wings.

FLORENCE

Did you live in Cornwall then?

LEWIS

No. B-Bayswater. [*Pause.*] It *is* quiet! Isn't it odd to think that we are alone in the house? It'll be the only time probably.

FLORENCE

Will it?

LEWIS

At the end of the week, are you going back? Then I shall get some work done.

FLORENCE

Aren't you getting any work done?

LEWIS

Not since you came. It wasn't possible.

FLORENCE

Isn't that rather a foolish thing to say?

LEWIS

Very.

FLORENCE

I should have thought that you were one of those people who allow nothing to interfere with work.

LEWIS

I am. [*Pause.*] I'd have left here a week ago, if I had been sure——

FLORENCE

Sure of what?

LEWIS

[*Coming toward her*]: That I hadn't a chance—with you.

FLORENCE

[*Backing away a little*]: What do you mean?

LEWIS

[*Smiling*]: I can't make you out. That's what is so tantalising. I don't quite understand you.

FLORENCE

[*Rather pathetically*]: I should have thought I was a very easy person to understand.

LEWIS

[*Shaking his head*]: You're not quite like any other woman.

FLORENCE

Oh, well. [*With an attempt at lightness*]: No two women are alike, are they?

LEWIS

They're all alike. If you were any other woman I'd have said you wanted me to make love to you, but for all that I'm afraid of you. I don't know how to begin.

FLORENCE

Mr. Dodd! Really——

LEWIS

[*With bitter mockery*]: This is so sudden.
[*Enter* ROBERTO.]
Oh, go to hell, Roberto. Go away!
[LEWIS *pushes* ROBERTO *out.*]

FLORENCE

[*Distressed*]: I don't like this way of talking. I thought we were friends.

LEWIS

Did you?

FLORENCE

Didn't you?

LEWIS

No. I have no friends.

FLORENCE

But that's a dreadful thing to say.

LEWIS

I had one. He's dead.

FLORENCE

Sanger?

LEWIS

Yes! Sanger. Now he's gone the world's so cold —there's nothing left.

FLORENCE

I'm your friend if you want a friend.

LEWIS

[*Turning on her*]: I don't. I want more.

FLORENCE

No, no——

LEWIS

Well, shouldn't I be a fool if I didn't want more? That's why I've stayed. On the chance of getting more.

FLORENCE

Oh, don't talk like that.

LEWIS

Wasn't I right? You're never going back to England.

FLORENCE

I—don't—know——

LEWIS

You're coming with me—aren't you?

FLORENCE

Where?

LEWIS

Oh, anywhere. I'm not particular.

FLORENCE

Please don't talk in that way.

LEWIS

Why not?

FLORENCE

[*Weakly*]: You—you take too much for granted.

LEWIS

I always do. [*Intercepts her as she tries to get out of the room*]: No, don't go away! We may not get a chance to be alone again.

FLORENCE

Perhaps that would be as well.

LEWIS

And afterward, when you get back to England, you'll be sorry. You'll wish that you hadn't run away from me.

FLORENCE

Let me go, please. I—I'm disappointed in you. I thought you were—that you liked me too well to talk in this way.

LEWIS

Like! I love you!

[*They embrace passionately.* ROBERTO *comes in and begins to clear the table without taking any notice of them.*]

Damn you, Roberto! Can't you keep your ugly mug out of here?

ROBERTO

[*Grinning*]: Si, Signor!

[*He goes out.*]

LEWIS

[*Kisses her rather roughly. She starts back frightened*]: What is it? What's the matter?

FLORENCE

Nothing! Nothing! Oh, Lewis! I love you! I loved you from the very first minute I saw you. [*Hides her face in his shoulder*]: I'll go with you—anywhere.

LEWIS

[*Touched*]: You're only a child really, and I thought you so grand. You're like my poor little Tessa. Don't cry, sweet one.

FLORENCE

I can't help it. I feel so weak.

LEWIS

No one shall hurt you. [*With resolution*]: We'll get married. I'll look after you, Florence. When shall we be married?

FLORENCE

[*Laughing, her face still hidden*]: Whenever you like.

LEWIS

Why are you laughing?

FLORENCE

[*Holding him away from her*]: Now, tell the truth! It had only just occurred to you, hadn't it?

LEWIS

[*Guiltily*]: Oh, no. Not at all. But I ought to have mentioned it before! We'll be married as soon as possible.

FLORENCE

Oh, I'm so happy. [*Gaily*]: Now! Let's make plans!

LEWIS

Plans! What plans? We've made 'em. We'll be married at once.

FLORENCE

Yes. But after? Where shall we live? In England?

LEWIS

I'd sooner live anywhere else.

FLORENCE

Oh, but Lewis! I know just exactly the house for us. I've had my eye on it for ages and I know it's going to be sold this summer. Listen! It's at Strand-on-the-Green, just under Kew Bridge, and it dates from Charles II, and——

LEWIS

Pause, pause, my angel! Remember that I have no money.

FLORENCE

No, but I have. Oh, Lewis, you must come to England! I know so many people; musical people who would be so useful—— I'm sure it's just the moment in your career that you ought to come.

LEWIS

You're delicious when you chatter like a little starling.

FLORENCE

Now be serious! Why won't you live in England? Is it because your people live there?

LEWIS

My—— Oh yes!

FLORENCE

In London, you said?

LEWIS

They lived in London when I last heard of them.

FLORENCE

And you've quarrelled?

LEWIS

Does it matter?

FLORENCE

Of course I don't want to bother you to tell me, if you'd rather not. But it's better, don't you think, for a wife to know?

LEWIS

Know what?

FLORENCE

The sort of people her husband belongs to. I haven't the vaguest idea about yours.

LEWIS

My family are very disagreeable.

FLORENCE

Yes, dear?

LEWIS

That's all?

FLORENCE

How many are there?

LEWIS

A father and a sister there used to be. My father was a school inspector, and then he went into Parliament. He writes books. Two a year. Little text books and outlines of things for working men who want to educate themselves. You know; Science and Literature, Half-hours with the Great Poets, and Five Minutes with our Empire Builders; and Astronomy, the Starry Heavens in Ten Chapters; that sort of tripe.

FLORENCE

He sounds exactly like a man my father is always complaining of. He calls him Fulsome Felix, and sits on Committees with him—Six Felix Dodd.

LEWIS

That's him. He is Sir Felix Dodd.

FLORENCE

W—what?

LEWIS

He is Sir Felix Dodd. Know him?

FLORENCE

I—I've met him.

LEWIS

You have my sympathy.

FLORENCE

Good heavens! How very strange! I never knew that he had a son.

LEWIS

Alas!

FLORENCE

At least I did hear that he had a son who was an awful sc——

LEWIS

Don't mention it.

FLORENCE

—I mean I never knew that his son was you. When I heard your Symphony I somehow never connected——

LEWIS

Natural enough. I don't suppose they boast of me.

FLORENCE

But then I must know your sister quite well. She married—someone in the Foreign Office. She sings, doesn't she?

LEWIS

She may. She never had much sense of humour.

FLORENCE

Oh, Lewis. This is extraordinary. Oh, I am happy!

LEWIS

Why?

[ROBERTO *comes in again to clear away and this time she gives it up and continues, trying not to notice him.*]

FLORENCE

I'd have married you if your father had been a crossing sweeper.

LEWIS

That's a compliment anyhow.

[*Tries to kiss her, but she edges away, with a jerk of the head at* ROBERTO.]

Oh, don't mind him. He's used to it.

FLORENCE

I'm not.

LEWIS

You soon will be. Roberto!

ROBERTO

Si, Signor.

LEWIS

*Son' promessi sposi!* [*Points to himself and* FLORENCE.]

ROBERTO

*Ah basta!*

FLORENCE

We'll take him to England with us.

LEWIS

Poor old Roberto. He doesn't quite deserve that. But why did you think my father was a crossing sweeper?

FLORENCE

I didn't. I merely said I'd have married you if he had been. But it will be so much easier for me if my people know something of your people.

LEWIS

Well, if it makes you happy, I expect it's all right.

FLORENCE

Because some day one hopes——

LEWIS

What does one hope?

FLORENCE

That you may forget it all—and make it up.

LEWIS

Make it up? Not on your life.

FLORENCE

[*Archly*]: We'll see.

LEWIS

No, no, Florence. I'm serious about this.

FLORENCE

[*With raised eyebrows*]: So am I.

LEWIS

I ran away from home because I couldn't bear it.

FLORENCE

Probably there were faults on both sides.

LEWIS

I've no doubt that all the faults were on my side. But you must promise that you won't make me go back there, ever.

FLORENCE

I won't promise.

[TESSA *and* LINA *appear in the doorway.*]

Then I won't—— [*He sees the girls and is silent.*]

TESSA

You won't what, Lewis?

FLORENCE

[*Turning*]: Why, children! You're back soon.

LEWIS

A shade long you've been, if anything.

FLORENCE

Did you see them off?

PAULINA

Yes.

FLORENCE

Where's Antonia?

PAULINA

Trying to buy another suitcase with Ike.

TESSA

[*Turning to* LEWIS]: What won't you, Lewis?

LEWIS

Oh, nothing!

PAULINA

You look as if you'd been getting into mischief, doesn't he, Teresa?

TESSA

He does.

PAULINA

Out with it, Lewis. What have you done now?

TESSA

[*Eyeing him carefully*]: I think I'm going to be sick again.

PAULINA

Not here! Not now! You can't now.

LEWIS

[*Swallowing twice*]: Er—girls!

FLORENCE

[*In an undertone*]: Oh, Lewis! Must you? Now?

TESSA

Let us know the worst.

LEWIS

Girls! I'm going to be married.

[TESSA *gives a little cry of pain and leans against the door.* ROBERTO *clears away noisily.*]

PAULINA

You won't—you won't marry Florence?

LEWIS

Oh, yes, I shall. Sha'n't I, Florence?

FLORENCE

[*Smiling*]: It looks like it.

PAULINA

But are you sure it isn't a mistake? All right, Tessa. You needn't pinch me. I won't say anything. All I mean is, hadn't you better wait a bit? Don't do it in a hurry.

[TESSA *collapses.*]

LEWIS

Tessa! What's the matter?

FLORENCE

You ran up the hill too fast.

TESSA

[*Murmurs*]: Too—many—green gooseberries.

PAULINA

She often faints like that. It's nothing.

FLORENCE

[*Supporting her*]: Poor child! Where's the pain? In the chest? Would you like to go to bed?

TESSA

[*Pushing her away*]: No—I'll—have—to—die—on this sofa.

PAULINA

She gobbles them so. I told her she'd be sorry.

FLORENCE

She's very blue. Has she had a shock at any time? Is her heart strong?

[TESSA *faints.*]

LEWIS

She's fainted. Tessa! Don't be so alarming! My dear!

FLORENCE

That won't do much good, Lewis. Get some brandy. Roberto! *L'acqua fredda e asciugamani!*

[LEWIS *and* ROBERTO *run out.*]

PAULINA

[*Facing* FLORENCE *over* TESSA'S *body*]: You mustn't! You mustn't! You can't have him!

FLORENCE

What on earth are you talking about?

PAULINA

He's Tessa's. He belongs to Tessa.

FLORENCE

Are you mad? You don't know what you are saying.

PAULINA

I do. I do. He loves Tessa better than he loves you. She's too young, but he can wait.

FLORENCE

Ssh!

PAULINA

He ought to marry Tessa, not you. You're just an outside person that's come butting in. We don't want you! Go away! Go away!

[*She flings her arms round her sister's neck, sobbing.*]

CURTAIN

# ACT TWO

## ACT TWO

### Scene I

Scene—*The drawing-room at Strand-on-the-Green. At the back three tall narrow French windows giving on to small balconies with curved iron railings before each. Beyond a view of the river Thames. The room is very sparsely furnished. The walls are a soft cream or lemon yellow. The floor is polished wood, not parquet, with one rug by the fireplace L, and one by the double doors down R. The grand piano stands in top left-hand corner of room, keys facing toward river, so that a singer standing by accompanist faces the audience. In front of the centre window is a very large settee, piled with bright-coloured cushions. Door leading across a passage to kitchen is up R. There is an oblong table between the doors R, evidently to be used for refreshments. Etchings and sketches in narrow-beaded frames adorn the walls. Some bright lustre jugs relieve the appearance of the mantelpiece. Quite a bright, tasteful room, but somehow lacking in the easy charm of an artist's surroundings. A bluish dusk is falling.*

[Florence, *in a chintz overall, is arranging flowers. The room is all ready for a party.* Lewis *sprawls*

*on the divan, smoking and watching her in some amusement.*]

FLORENCE

You might give those divan cushions a shake up, Lewis.

LEWIS

What's the use? They'll get squashed again as soon as people sit on them.

FLORENCE

[*Violently pommelling every cushion in the room*]: Lazy-bones! Our Italian honeymoon has quite spoilt your *morale*. These southern countries! They're poppy and mandragora, you know.

LEWIS

They're what?

FLORENCE

They tend to make one sluttish. It was high time we came back to England.

[ROBERTO, *very fine in a clean white linen suit, brings in a tray of glasses from the kitchen.*]

[*In rapid Italian*]: On this table. The drinks you will bring in at ten o'clock. Supper in the dining-room at a quarter past eleven, and then you will serve the zabaiglione. Bring now the cigarettes and the cigars. [ROBERTO *goes out. Looking round the*

*room complacently*]: I must say, I do think it looks rather nice. [*Pause.*] Do you like your home, dear?

LEWIS

[*Also staring round*]: It's—it's an Ideal Home. I saw on an omnibus to-day, there's a whole exhibition of 'em somewhere.

FLORENCE

Do you remember when first I told you about this house and you didn't want to come, and I said we simply must?

LEWIS

I remember.

FLORENCE

And now—here we are!

LEWIS

Here we, in a manner of speaking, are.

FLORENCE

I'm going to dress now. Are you coming, or can I have the bathroom first?

LEWIS

I'm not coming yet. There's hours of time. Don't go. I want to talk to you. [*Gets up*]: I've had a letter.

FLORENCE

[*Pausing on her way out of the room*]: Oh yes, that reminds me. So have I. Your sister is coming to-night after all.

LEWIS

What? I've told you once I won't have her here.

FLORENCE

My dear Lewis! It's childish, this keeping up of an old feud. Millicent is quite ready to make it up.

LEWIS

Then she wants something.

FLORENCE

Couldn't it be genuine good feeling?

LEWIS

She never had an ounce of it in her life. She's up to no good. Why can't she leave us alone?

FLORENCE

I don't want to offend her. She carries a good deal of weight in some quarters. She could easily put a spoke in your wheel.

LEWIS

[*Sulkily*]: I haven't got a wheel.

FLORENCE

And she's very musical.

LEWIS

Musical! My God!

FLORENCE

Many people think her a fine singer. I don't personally care for her voice, but——

LEWIS

A filthy rat squeak! And she's as ugly as sin too. And a tongue like a horse radish, as you'll find to your cost before you're much older.

FLORENCE

There is no need to be so violent.

LEWIS

She's a damned musical snob. Nothing else.
[ROBERTO *comes in with the cigarettes and cigars.*]

FLORENCE

Ssh!

LEWIS

I won't ssh. Why the hell can't I say what I like in my own house?

FLORENCE

You're perfectly impossible. [*In Italian to* ROBERTO]: Thank you, that will do. [ROBERTO *goes out.*] I wish you wouldn't talk like that in front of Roberto.

LEWIS

Why ever not? Robert is used to bad language, thank God.

FLORENCE

[*Plaintively*]: Can't you see how disastrous it is when I'm trying to train him properly?

LEWIS

Sorry!

FLORENCE

In a way, he's exactly the right servant for us. Really feudal. He gives the touch of amusing unconventionality that I want.

LEWIS

I don't understand you. But I'm sure he looks very fine now you've cleaned him up.

FLORENCE

He produces the right effect.

LEWIS

Why should you want to produce any sort of effect?

FLORENCE

One can't help producing an effect of some sort, so one might as well try to make it a good one.

LEWIS

Who else is coming to this party of yours? Half London?

FLORENCE

[*Smiles to herself*]: Well, as a matter of fact, they are all rather important, from our point of view. I've got the very cream to begin with, if it's known that they come to our house, the rest of the world won't wait to be asked. For one thing, I've actually persuaded Sir Bartlemy Pugh. It's a great honour; he hardly ever goes out nowadays.

LEWIS

That distinguished old pussy cat? But, of course, I remember! He wrote the most bee-ootiful hymn tunes!

FLORENCE

[*Keeping her temper*]: You never heard any of them, dear. He's a charming old man, and my godfather. Then I've asked Dr. Dawson—you know! The Amalgamated Symphony Orchestra——

LEWIS

I know. He's sound enough. I like him.

FLORENCE

So do I. I've known him since I was that high.

LEWIS

All the distinguished old men in England seem to have rocked your cradle, my dear. Who else?

FLORENCE

My cousins, the Mainwarings. He's in the city; he's a bit of a Philistine, but he makes a lot of money, which she spends in patronising the arts.

LEWIS

How sweet of her!

FLORENCE

Oh! And the Leyburns. They run the Guild of Beauty, you know.

LEWIS

What in thunder is the Guild of Beauty?

FLORENCE

They give concerts in the slums. Really good music. That concert we went to in Southwark was got up by them.

LEWIS

Call that really good music?

FLORENCE

It was a high level for amateurs.

LEWIS

Amateurs!

FLORENCE

Don't adopt that contemptuous tone. They've done some splendid work in bringing music to the people.

LEWIS

What do they want to do that for?

[*He goes across to the piano and begins to pick out notes in a vague way which shows how nervous and impatient he is getting.*]

FLORENCE

My dear Lewis! Why do *you* write music?

LEWIS

God knows.

FLORENCE

You want to give pleasure to people.

LEWIS

NO!

FLORENCE

That's a pose. Oh, do stop that strumming!

LEWIS

[*Jumping up and banging down the lid of the keyboard*]: It's not. I swear it's not. The sight of a lot of human beings, listening with their mouths open, makes me sick and ashamed of my work. Sanger felt the same way about it.

FLORENCE

I shall want you to play to my guests to-night, so you must try to get the better of that feeling.

LEWIS

[*His momentary vehemence a little calmed*]: You'd better write down what I have to say and I'll learn it off. [*Casually*]: I've asked Ike and Tony, by the way.

FLORENCE

What? To-night? . . . Of course, as you know, I'm always delighted to see your friends, but in a party like this where everyone is so influential——

LEWIS

Ike is as influential as the whole of your party put together. He's very nearly made up his mind to finance the production of my Symphony in Three Keys, at Queen's Hall, this spring.

FLORENCE

What! Lewis! Your Symphony at Queen's Hall. How perfectly thrilling! Why didn't you tell me before?

LEWIS

It isn't settled yet. I want to talk it over with Ike to-night.

FLORENCE

Of course, if I'd known—I'll call on Tony to-morrow.

LEWIS

[*Acidly*]: You needn't trouble.

FLORENCE

You know, my dear—Mr. Birnbaum is—isn't a gentleman, and one must face the fact——

LEWIS

Thank God he's not.

FLORENCE

That's quite the wrong attitude! You put the wrong things first. Music—all art—has no justification unless——

LEWIS

[*Striding about the room*]: It doesn't need a justification——

FLORENCE

It's only part of the supreme art—the business of living beautifully. You can't put it on a pedestal above decency and humanity and civilisation as your precious Sanger seems to have done. Human life is more important.

LEWIS

I know! I know! You want to use it like electric light. Like the saucepans you buy for your kitchen. I know! I've seen it. In my father's house. [*With great menace*]: That's why I ran away! It's plague, pestilence and famine—bloody nonsense.

FLORENCE

Lewis, I will not have it. Is it quite impossible to discuss things without swearing?

[ROBERTO *comes in with a basket of logs.*]

LEWIS

Isn't it, Roberto? All this—[*indicates room*]—damn bloody nonsense?

ROBERTO

[*Not understanding*]: Si! Si! Damnbloodi nonsense!

[LEWIS *collapses into a roar of laughter and so does* ROBERTO.]

FLORENCE

[*Angrily, in Italian*]: That is enough. Go away at once!

ROBERTO

[*Crestfallen*]: *Scusi!* [*He puts the basket of logs by the fire and goes out.*]

FLORENCE

I think you must be crazy, Lewis. I'm going to dress.

LEWIS

[*Barring her way*]: You haven't enquired about my letter yet.

FLORENCE

[*Impatiently*]: Oh, who is it?

LEWIS

Tessa and Lina. They're not happy.

FLORENCE

Little monkeys! Fancy writing to you! May I see?

LEWIS

[*Takes letters out of his pocket*]: Paulina threatens suicide. She says: [*reads*] "I shall hang myself. But Tessa says I'm to say she won't. It's not so bad for her, as she has not got to play this hellish hockey because she has a valvular lesson that they found at the medical inspection, so she has to go walks instead." [*Anxiously*]: What's a valvular lesson?

FLORENCE

A valvular lesion, I suppose she means. Her house mistress wrote to me about it.

LEWIS

Is Tessa ill?

FLORENCE

No, no. She'll outgrow it. May I see Tessa's letter, please?

LEWIS

She says the same as Lina.

FLORENCE

I'd like to see it, please.

LEWIS

[*Reluctantly giving it*]: As Teresa puts it: she has to be in some place on a time-table at every minute of the day. And no allowance is made for transit.

FLORENCE

[*Reading*]: H'm! Not entirely sincere, is it?

LEWIS

Tessa is always sincere. [*Takes the letter back.*]

FLORENCE

Not altogether. Oh, my dear, need you read it all through again? She knows quite well she ought not to write at all. At the back of her mind is some idea she wants to hide.

LEWIS

Is there? Well, you've taught me something about our Tessa. I didn't know she could hide anything.

FLORENCE

If I were you I shouldn't answer them.

LEWIS

Indeed I shall. I shall advise them to run away if they don't like it.

FLORENCE

Don't be absurd. I must ask you not to do anything so silly.

LEWIS

Well then, take them away at the end of the term.

FLORENCE

I shall do no such thing.

LEWIS

At least take Tessa away. It's worse for Tessa. She was very nearly perfect before she went there——

FLORENCE

Teresa was very nearly perfect! What *do* you mean?

LEWIS

She's almost grown up! Too old for that kind of place.

FLORENCE

What sort of school do you recommend?

LEWIS

How should I know? Some place where they'll keep her just—as she is. I persuaded her to go with that idea.

FLORENCE

But to say that Teresa is very nearly perfect!

LEWIS

Was. I expect they've made an odious little guy of her by now.

FLORENCE

[*Mollified*]: She's at the awkward age. English schoolgirls are not interesting. But you must agree that on the whole it's best. They were so very insecure, poor babies!

LEWIS

[*Pause.*] I don't know what's the matter with me to-day. The prospect of this party makes me feel like Tessa on what she calls one of her dog days.

FLORENCE

It's only done to get you on.

LEWIS

I know. But I can't stomach it somehow. Only, if I learn off my little piece and say it like a gentleman will you do something for me in return?

FLORENCE

What thing?

LEWIS

Take the girls away from that tiresome school.

FLORENCE

That I can't do. It's for their good.

LEWIS

[*Referring to letter*]: But Tessa says——

FLORENCE

[*Snatching letter away*]: Oh, stop reading that nonsense! A school-girl's *schwärmerei.*

LEWIS

What do you mean? Give that thing back!

FLORENCE

Why should I?

LEWIS

Because I tell you to. It's mine. Give it to me!

FLORENCE

I won't. Tessa's correspondence is my affair. [*Puts letter behind her back*]: As her guardian, I've a right to supervise it. She's nothing to you.

LEWIS

[*Seizing her wrists and twisting her round*]: Give it back or you'll be sorry.

FLORENCE

Lewis! How dare you! You're hurting me!

LEWIS

I mean to. [*He gets possession of the letter. They stand glaring.*]

FLORENCE

You beast! You're as bad as Sanger!

LEWIS

Sanger wouldn't have put up with half the nonsense I've stood for.

[*He rushes from the room and falls over* ROBERTO, *who is listening at the keyhole. Curses him in Italian outside.*]

FLORENCE

[*Stands quite dazed for a minute and then smiles faintly and smoothes her hair*]: Dear me! What a hullabaloo! Talk about nerves! [*Calls*]: Roberto!

ROBERTO

[*Appearing*]: Si, Madame?

FLORENCE

What were you doing out there?

ROBERTO

Please—I watcha you fight viz Lewis.

FLORENCE

I am very much displeased. Has the master gone out?

ROBERTO

No, signora.

FLORENCE

Very well. I'm going to dress now.

[*She goes out, switching off the lights, followed by* ROBERTO. *The firelight and the blue wintry dusk*

*fill the room. Presently* Lewis *pokes his head round the door, sees the coast is clear, and slips in to the piano. He plays the first few bars of the Overture to The Magic Flute: stops, picks out the theme of Infelice Sconsolata, and then begins very softly to play* Tessa's *duet. The door is opened a little way as he plays, and there is a great whispering outside.* Paulina *pokes her head round.*]

Lewis

[*Playing*]: Who's there?

Paulina

[*Giggling*]: It's Lewis!

Lewis

[*Jumping up*]: How! Who! Why! Paulina? How on earth did you get here?
[Paulina *rushes to him and kisses him.*]

Paulina

Oh, Lewis! We've run away. We had to.
[*He sees that* Tessa *is lurking in the shadows.*]

Lewis

Tessa! Is that Tessa? [*Seizes her in his arms and brings her to the firelight*]: Let me look at you.

Tessa

Yes. It's me. I've come to lay my bones among you.

LEWIS

Oh, Tessa! Dear Tessa! This is splendid! How long it's been!

TESSA

Longer than the longest book.

LEWIS

Look up! Lift your head and kiss me. [*They kiss.*] Well, well!

PAULINA

Why have you got such a dark house, Lewis?

LEWIS

[*Switching on the light*]: It's not my house. It's my wife's. *She* bought it.

TESSA

[*Handing him a telegram*]: Roberto was on the doorstep taking this when we got here. He paid for our taxi as we had only 5½d. left. We've brought as many things as we could. We don't intend to go back; and I thought I would continue my studies here. *Pourquoi pas?*

LEWIS

[*Reading telegram*]: "Sanger sisters disappeared. Last seen nine a.m. Are they with you. Butterfield."

TESSA

Sanger sisters! Sounds like a music hall.

LEWIS

Who's Butterfield?

PAULINA

The headmistress. We rather liked her, but we didn't see enough of her.

TESSA

[*Eagerly*]: She had a nice voice and lovely clothes. She nearly made me believe that a person can be highly educated without being as ugly as the devil. The mere look of the rest of them was enough to make you sorry anyone ever learnt to read.

LEWIS

I don't know that I quite like the sound of Miss Butterfield. I expect she was a serpent in sheep's clothing, as Tessa used to say. It was high time you ran away. [*Staring—firmly as he looks again at the telegram*]: We'll send an answer to this at once to say that you aren't coming back.

[TESSA *and* PAULINA *jump for joy.*]

PAULINA

We can't possibly go back. We bore it in silence——

TESSA

No, Lina! Not in silence!

LEWIS

What made you run in the end?

PAULINA

An awful row in church yesterday. We'd forgotten to take any money to put in that bag, and I had to put in a button that I pulled off my——

TESSA

Ssh! You mustn't! Do you know, Lewis, they said you mustn't talk about them.

LEWIS

What?

TESSA

The things that Lina pulled the button off. The girls said we'd disgraced the school, and they sent us to—what did they call it?—Covent Garden?

PAULINA

Coventry!

TESSA

Coventry for a week. Then in the afternoon a girl in the next cubicle played the Sonata Pathétique over and over. She was putting in the expression.

LEWIS

[*Laughing*]: Oh, I see.

TESSA

We suddenly got tired of being taught how to behave by two hundred people all at once, so we up and hooked it. And that's that. Is this your best room, Lewis?

LEWIS

Yes.

TESSA

[*Looking round*]: It's very pretty.

PAULINA

[*With a little shiver*]: Is it always as—as tidy?

LEWIS

Always. You mustn't touch anything.

TESSA

Very right and proper, I'm sure.

[*They range round, examining.* TESSA *touches a note on the piano and grunts approval.*]

LEWIS

[*Humming*]: I'll build for thee a silver sty, Honey! said she.

PAULINA

Have you any bedrooms?

LEWIS

Three. And my dressing-room.

TESSA

What! A special room to dress in! How unsociable! When you're washing and dressing, that's just the time you want somebody to talk to. Is she cross when she wakes up in the morning, Lewis?

LEWIS

Not as cross as I am. [*Humming*]:

And in it nobly thou shalt lie!
Hunks! said he.

Funny! I must have heard that song when I was in petticoats. I've only just remembered it. It's most appropriate. [*Hums.*]

PAULINA

Why?

LEWIS

Oh, just because—there was a lady loved a swine——

TESSA

[*Having completed her survey*]: Well, I think *it's* lovely. You wouldn't expect Florence to have a lot of heavy sofas and things.

PAULINA

But still, she's married. Married ladies always have sofas; I don't call that a sofa. [*Points to settee.*]

TESSA

But it's pretty, Lina.

PAULINA

Drawing-rooms ought to be rich and grand. This isn't grand enough.

LEWIS

Our best things are in the parlour. I'll show you the whole concern later.

PAULINA

[*Espying the buffet*]: O-oh! Eatables! May we? We've had nothing all day.

LEWIS

Poor dears! You must be starving. Let's bring them over to the fire.

[*They bring plates and cushions and sit on the floor. Between them they carry about half-a-dozen plates of sandwiches, etc., over to the fire. They strew them over the floor in a half-circle round the fire.*]

TESSA

[*Seeing pair of candlesticks on mantel*]: Are those real?

LEWIS

Imitation.

TESSA

Ah, well. It's the sincerest form of flattery.

PAULINA

Oo-oh! Cream trifle.

LEWIS

Don't over-eat yourselves; you'll spoil your appetites for the party.

PAULINA

Are you giving a party?

LEWIS

Florence is giving a party. A musical *soirée.*

TESSA

What's that?

LEWIS

You'll see.

PAULINA

Shall we have to behave very nicely?

TESSA

We've had lessons in social life and custom from Miss Butterfield.

LEWIS

Ike and Tony are coming.

PAULINA

How delicious! What a good thing we brought our party frocks. They aren't much crushed. Fancy coming in for a party the very first night. Aren't you glad now, Tessa, that we ran away? She didn't want to come, you know, Lewis.

[ROBERTO *brings in the kitchen coffee pot, steaming.*]

PAULINA

My! Tessa, look at Roberto.

TESSA

Goodness! Isn't it lo-ovely? What's it for, Roberto?

ROBERTO

Roberto ver' clean, now, not so comfortable.

LEWIS

Looks like a second communion. Why didn't you want to run away, Tessa?

TESSA

I didn't mind school nearly as much as she did. It was new. And new things are always fun, in a way.

LEWIS

Still, you ran. And you ran here. Why?

TESSA

Because Lina did. I barred being left alone in that place.

PAULINA

I'd have done it long ago only we didn't know your address. Why didn't you answer our letters, Lewis?

LEWIS

I suppose I forgot.

PAULINA

Tessa said you wouldn't answer.

LEWIS

Did you, Tessa? Why?

TESSA

Because you have a forgetful nature.

LEWIS

No, I haven't.

TESSA

Yes, you have. I pity poor Florence.

LEWIS

Oh, hunks! [*He begins to hum again and strolls toward the piano.*]

TESSA

[*More softly*]: Play that tune you were playing when we came in. Ike used always to say musicians who could write good tunes were very few, and you were one of them.

LEWIS

Street musicians!

TESSA

That's what Sanger would say. But Jacob's right.

LEWIS

[*Begins to play*]: You're growing very smug, my girl. I don't like it. With your Miss Clutterbucks and all. I don't like it a bit. A regular miss!

TESSA

You said I would.

LEWIS

When?

TESSA

When you made me go to school. You said I'd turn into a lady.

LEWIS

I've been a fool.

[FLORENCE, *beautifully dressed, hurries in.*]

FLORENCE

Lewis! Aren't you ever going to dress? It's nearly—— Good heavens! [*Stares bewildered at the children and the disordered room*]: What! What is the meaning of this?

PAULINA

[*Kissing her*]: Dear Florence! Don't be angry.

TESSA

[*Kissing her*]: We thought we'd like to pay you a little visit. We—we've run away.

FLORENCE

Oh! You have, have you? Then you've been exceedingly naughty. I'm very vexed. And you'll go back at once.

LEWIS

There's no time to-night.

FLORENCE

No, but the very first thing to-morrow——

LEWIS, TESSA, PAULINA

Oh, Florence!

FLORENCE

I won't stand any nonsense of this kind.
[*A loud bell is heard ringing.*]
Good heavens! People are coming! And the room in this mess! Take these cups into the kitchen someone! [*Flies about putting cushions back*]: Go! Go and dress, Lewis! Oh, give me patience!
[*They all tidy the room hastily.* ROBERTO *runs chattering to and fro.*]

TESSA

Shall we put on our party frocks, Florence? We've got them with us.

FLORENCE

No. You'll go straight to bed. I'll tell Roberto to get the spare room ready. Do go, Lewis!

PAULINA

But aren't we coming to your party?

FLORENCE

Certainly not! You neither of you know how to behave.

TESSA

Oh, we do! We do! We've learnt a lot of politeness at school. Please let us!

PAULINA

We promise we'll sit as mum as two statues the whole evening. Florence! Please!

[*Another ring is heard.*]

LEWIS

If they don't come, I don't. So choose.

FLORENCE

Oh well, let them come. Only do go now!

[LEWIS *and the children dance gaily off arm-in-arm to the kitchen just as* ROBERTO *shows in the first guests.*]

ROBERTO

Missis Gregory! Sair Bartlemy Pugh!

[MILLICENT GREGORY *comes in and kisses* FLORENCE *warmly, staring about her inquisitively as she does so.* SIR BARTLEMY *ambles in behind her.*]

MILLICENT

Florence dear! What an enchanting house! It's too terribly nice! I can't tell you what I feel about it. Lewis is really a very lucky creature.

FLORENCE

I'm so glad you like it. How do you do, Sir Bartlemy? It's so good of you to come.

SIR B.

[*Who knows that it is*]: Delightful, my dear child! Delightful! You're very snug here in your little Chiswick home.

FLORENCE

I'm so sorry Lewis isn't down. The wretch went on working till the last minute and I'm afraid he's only just gone to change.

MILLICENT

How like Lewis! Just the same as ever! But then the idea of Lewis as a host at all is so marvellous, somehow. Tell me, who is coming? I heard a rumour that we were going to meet *the* Birnbaum.

FLORENCE

Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Birnbaum are coming, but——

MILLICENT

My dear, you're wonderful! How did you get hold of him?

SIR B.

[*Disgustedly*]: They tell me he wears emerald shirt studs and owns fifteen opera houses. How do such people exist?

MILLICENT

I don't suppose Lewis minds that. After all, you're made if you can get in with that man.

ROBERTO

[*Announcing*]: Mister and Missis Leyburn!

[*The* LEYBURNS *come in. She is a dowdy, pretty woman in a Liberty tea gown.*]

MRS. L.

Florence! My *dear!* What a delicious place!

FLORENCE

So glad!

MRS. L.

[*Gushing, waving her Liberty scarf about*]: Oh, but I can't *tell* you what I feel about it. It's—it's—— Oh, my dear!

MR. L.

[*With a squeaky voice*]: Such an atmosphere! [*To* FLORENCE]: How do you do? It's incredibly good! There's a *tenue*—a feel about it all.

MRS. L.

[*To* MILLICENT]: How do you do, Mrs. Gregory? I thought I caught sight of you at the Stravinsky thing this afternoon.

MILLICENT

Oh, really.

MR. L.

[*To* FLORENCE]: Yes, you've quite captured the essence of beauty without the usual vulgarities of an artistic *milieu.*

MRS. L.

[*To* MILLICENT]: Very second-rate, I thought didn't you?

MILLICENT

Personally I liked it.

MRS. L.

[*To* FLORENCE]: Oh, but my dear, the *décor* is enchanting. Peveril, do look. [*Waving her arms and making vague shapes*]: That little vignette there—and the river—and those shadows falling just there—isn't it too heavenly?

MR. L.

Quite in Florence's best manner. Naturally the river helps any house. Gives it a *cadre* of its own.

MRS. L.

Sir Bartlemy—how too lovely! I told Peveril we were in for a delicious thing to-night.

MILLICENT

[*Talking her down*]: I always thought Jacob Birnbaum was a myth.

MR. L.

[*Squeaking*]: Birnbaum! Oh, a dreadful man. A dreadful man! Don't talk about him. He holds us all in the hollow of his hand. He is to decide the opera programme this season—— Too fearful!

MRS. L.

[*In a loud whisper to him*]: He's coming here to-night, dear.

MR. L.

Oh, excellent, excellent! We'll give him a few hints about Covent Garden.

ROBERTO

[*Announcing*]: Il dottore Dossonne.

[DR. DAWSON, *a large, shabby, elderly man, looks a little dazed by the babel which is going on.*]

FLORENCE

Ah, Dr. Dawson. This *is* nice of you.

DAWSON

[*Gruffly but good-humoured*]: How d'ye do, Florence Dodd. No, don't make eyes at me. I've come to talk to this husband of yours. Where is he?

FLORENCE

He'll be here in a minute. He went up late to dress.

DAWSON

I see. And now he's afraid to come down? I don't wonder.

MRS. L.

Florence, we must ask the great Birnbaum to give us one of the Sanger operas this year.

MILLICENT

Isn't that a trifle *vieux jeu?*

MRS. L.

[*Acidly*]: Oh, do you think so?

MR. L.

Surely not! The man was dynamic.

DAWSON

[*To* SIR BARTLEMY]: How de do, Pugh?

SIR B.

Flourishingly well, thank you. And you?

MR. L.

[*To* MRS. L. *and* MILLICENT]: He had the *zeitgeist*, a sort of virginal brutality——

DAWSON

Beg pardon? I'm sorry. I thought you were addressing me.

MRS. L.

[*Simpering*]: No, no! We're talking of Sanger, Dr. Dawson.

DAWSON

What about him?

MRS. L.

Personally, I found his *Akbar* incredibly moving. You remember, Peveril, in Milan.

SIR B.

Ugh! I may be old-fashioned, but I don't think it's music.

MR. L.

Of course the great point about Sanger is his *chiaroscuro* of orchestration. Those plangent values——

DAWSON

Plangent grandmother!

FLORENCE, MILLICENT, MR. L., MRS. L.

[*Simultaneously*]: Sanger—— [*To each other*]: I beg your pardon!

[*They all murmur "Not at all," and there is a pause.*]

ROBERTO

[*Announcing with pride*]: Miss Antonia Sanger—ah, no! la famiglia Birnbaum.

[TONY *and* JACOB *appear.* TONY *is very beautifully dressed like a little peacock, in a Chinese coat with amazing jewels.*]

TONY

Oh, Florence, this *is* fun. Where's Lewis?

FLORENCE

How are you, Antonia? I'm glad to see you. D'you know—— [*Begins to introduce her.*]

MILLICENT

[*Pouncing upon* JACOB]: How d'you do, Mr. Birnbaum? I've heard so much about you from my brother Lewis.

JACOB

[*Beaming at her*]: Ach, so! You are the sister of Lewis? I am so pleased to know you. Tonya, here is the sister of *unser* Lewis.

MILLICENT

Ah, Mrs. Birnbaum! Just the person I want to meet. I've made such a wonderful discovery. Quite a remarkable contralto. Would you and your husband go on my list of patrons for her first—— [*She draws* TONY *aside.*]

FLORENCE

[*To* JACOB]: May I introduce Mr. and Mrs. Leyburn?

JACOB

[*Clicking his heels*]: *Bitte sehr.*

FLORENCE

They sing such jolly things, madrigals and chanties and so forth. Charming duets.

JACOB

So! [*Bowing*]: That must be nice for you.

FLORENCE

Why not break the ice for us, my dear? It's no use waiting for Lewis.

JACOB

[*Courteously*]: *Bitte! Volksliede! Ach! Ich habe sie sehr gern.*

MRS. L.

Oh, my dear, you *are* so unexpected. Really we've brought nothing suitable. Did you, Peveril?

MR. L.

Well, I did bring a few little things in case. [*He produces a bulky portfolio.*]

FLORENCE

There now!

MRS. L.

No, really. Somebody else had much better begin. You see, I'd no idea of such a distinguished audience.

FLORENCE

Oh, please. One of your well-known ones.

MR. L.

[*Jocose*]: Come along, Erda. Evidently we sha'n't get away without.

MRS. L.

Well, just a short one then.

FLORENCE

That is nice of you. Now, is the piano as you'd like it? [*Raising her voice*]: Please! Erda and Peveril Leyburn are going to be kind to us.
[*General murmurs.*]

SIR B.

Ah, charming! Charming!

FLORENCE

Sir Bartlemy, won't you sit here?

DAWSON

[*To* MILLICENT]: Pretty decent view from these windows.

MILLICENT

Quite pleasant.

FLORENCE

Dr. Dawson?

DAWSON

[*Swinging round*]: Eh? [*To* MILLICENT]: Somebody's going to sing. We'd better sit down.

FLORENCE

[*To* MR. L.]: Can you manage? That lamp *is* rather tiresome.

MR. L.

[*Disentangling yards of flex from his feet*]: It's quite all right. [*He sets the lamp on the piano, and it begins to flicker.*]

FLORENCE

That switch is a little loose, I think. Can I help you?

MR. L.

Where's the——

FLORENCE

It's underneath.

MR. L.

I see. Don't trouble. Ah, that's right.
[*The light comes on again.*]

MRS. L.

This one, Peveril?

FLORENCE

[*Softly, to where* MILLICENT *is whispering to* DAWSON]: Ssh!

[*They begin to sing a ballad with appropriate gestures and expressions. The moment the piano keys are struck the light recommences flickering.* FLORENCE *creeps across and gingerly removes lamp to a side table, where it remains still.*]

ROBERTO

[*Loud*]: Mr. and Missis Manninga!

FLORENCE

[*Loudly*]: Ssh!

[*The* MAINWARINGS *consist of a large healthy-looking conventional husband, rather frightened by present company, and a small wife with a determined but faded intellectual manner and horn-rimmed spectacles.* FLORENCE *gives them elaborate smiles and indicates seats upon which they hurriedly salvage themselves. During second verse* LEWIS, TESSA *and* TONY *poke their noses round the kitchen door.*]

TESSA

[*Whispering to* PAULINA]: Putting in the expression!

[*As the duet finishes they all rush in.* LEWIS *is in untidy dress clothes with a rather dirty white tie. The two girls are in rather crushed white muslin frocks, but they have forgotten to change their outdoor shoes. Their hair has obviously been slapped down with a damp brush. They rush at* TONY. *Their greetings are mixed with the applause of the guests.* MR. *and* MRS. LEYBURN *rather baffled and a little disappointed.*]

TESSA

Tonikins! How lovely to see you! How *are* you?

TONY

Tessa! Lina! What are *you* doing here?

TESSA

We're paying a little visit to Lewis and Florence.

TONY

What a lovely surprise!

FLORENCE

[*To* MR. *and* MRS. L.]: That was *charming* of you. Thank you so much. Can we have some more later?

MRS. L.

Afraid I'm not in very good voice to-night.

[FLORENCE *gathers* MR. *and* MRS MAINWARING *into a group beside the fireplace.*]

MR. M.

[*Shaking hands*]: Good-evening, Mrs. Dodd.

FLORENCE

D'you know the Leyburns?

MR. M.

How de do? You sang delightfully. There's nothing to beat Gilbert and Sullivan. [*With a guffaw*]: As a matter of fact, it's the only music I can stand.

MRS. M.

[*Nudging him*]: Robert!

MR. M.

Yes, dear?

MRS. M.

[*Whispering*]: Don't be stupid.

MR. M.

Eh?

[JACOB *and* TONY *naturally gravitate toward* TESSA *and the others.*]

LEWIS

Hello, Ike.

TONY

Lewis, I'm so excited about your concert. But you mustn't have it in March.

LEWIS

Why not?

TONY

Because I sha'n't be able to come. [*Exchanges glances with* JACOB]: It's a secret. [*Whispers to* LEWIS.]

LEWIS

No! Congratulations.

TONY

You'd much better congratulate Ike. It's more his doing than mine.

FLORENCE

[*Coming forward, desperately*]: Lewis! Your other guests.

[Lewis *vaguely and monotonously greets the* Leyburns, *the* Mainwarings, Sir Bartlemy *and* Millicent; *and then falls upon* Dawson.]

Lewis

Hullo, Dawson! I wanted to see *you*. Do you know Birnbaum? Ike! Come here! We want your orchestra for my concert, don't we, Ike?

[Lewis, Dawson *and* Jacob *retire to the drink table and plunge into a discussion over whiskeys and sodas.*]

Florence

[*Detaching the children, who are whispering with* Tony]: You know my small cousins, don't you, Millicent? They're here just for the half term.

Tessa

[*Surprised*]: Why, Florence——

Millicent

Small cousins! Why I thought they were much younger than that!

Florence

Over there you'd better sit, Teresa. No. Shake hands with people first.

[Teresa *and* Paulina *go round the circle saying "How do you do" exactly as* Lewis *has done, and then sit down side by side in a corner.*]

FLORENCE

[*After an earnest conversation with* MRS. MAINWARING]: Now we're going to have some Debussy.

[MRS. M. *marches firmly to the piano and screws up the seat, and wipes her hands on her handkerchief.*]

SIR B.

[*Moving slightly*]: Allow me.

MRS. M.

[*Finally*]: It's quite all right.

LEWIS

Have a whiskey and soda, Dawson.

DAWSON

Thanks.

MRS. M.

[*Commandingly*]: Robert!

[MAINWARING *had been furtively making for the buffet. He turns round and places the music for her, and prepared to turn over.*]

FLORENCE

Can you see?

MRS. M.

[*Looking expectantly at distant lamp*]: I think I can manage.

[MR. M. *goes toward lamp.*]

FLORENCE

[*Hurriedly*]: Don't touch that.

[*Too late. He lifts it up. It goes out. He puts it down hurriedly. Preparatory chord.*]

LEWIS

[*In a whisper*]: Say when.

DAWSON

[*As quietly as a gruff voice allows*]: When!

[*With a glare* MRS. M. *plays a rather tiresome, indefinite piece.* LEWIS *beckons to* TESSA *to operate the soda. It explodes, squirting all over the buffet.*]

TONY

Ssh!

[*The piece is played to a running accompaniment of tiny noises as* LEWIS *passes plates of sandwiches, etc., amongst the Sanger family. He indicates various drinks in dumb show to* MAINWARING *at the piano. Latter nods and winks back, and creeps away from the piano to take the desired drink from* LEWIS *just when he should have turned over.* MRS. M. *fumbles for a moment, and* FLORENCE, SIR B. *and* MR. L. *all make movements to rise and assist her.* MR. M. *goes back hurriedly, but is too late. His wife has turned over for herself. As the piano piece concludes* LEWIS *is struggling to draw the cork of a cider bottle amidst*

*whispered directions and giggles from the Sanger girls. Amidst much interest from them, he draws it with a loud pop just in the quiet concluding passage of the music. General handclapping and applause.*]

FLORENCE

That was kind of you. Thank you. You played it beautifully.

MRS. M.

[*Furious*]: It wasn't at all good. [*With a glare at the group round the buffet*]: One needs a good deal of concentration for Debussy.
[*A burst of laughter from the buffet.*]

MR. M.

[*Laughing heartily*]: I heard a better one last week.

FLORENCE

[*Struggling bravely to keep things going*]: Lewis, dear!

LEWIS

Hello!

FLORENCE

There are lots of very thirsty people over here, too.

LEWIS

Sorry! Large supplies will arrive by special convoy immediately.

[*The group round the buffet breaks up and invades the other side of the room, carrying drinks and sandwiches. General buzz of talk.*]

TONY

[*To* JACOB]: I'm afraid that lady is really annoyed.

JACOB

I do not wonder. It was not pretty, this accompaniment that Lewis has provided.

TONY

But it's awful for poor Florence. Do let's suggest something to cheer them up.

JACOB

[*Going up to* LEWIS *genially*]: It is time, I think, that you shall play us something of your own, Lewis.

[*Everyone turns hopefully to* LEWIS. FLORENCE, *glad of the suggestion, brightens up.*]

FLORENCE

Yes, yes. Will you play now, Lewis?

MRS. L.

[*Clapping her hands*]: Yes, do play.

DAWSON

Something long and loud, Lewis.

MR. L.

The longer and louder the better.

LEWIS

Very well. [*Plays a few faint notes, thoughtfully, while they sit expectant*]: I'll sing. [*Begins the prelude of his duet with* TESSA]: Tessa!

TESSA

[*Starting up*]: Yes? [*Shyly and obligingly to* FLORENCE]: Must I sing now?

FLORENCE

[*Quietly to* LEWIS]: You can't. It would be absurd. Tessa can't sing when we have trained singers here.

LEWIS

Trained singers?

FLORENCE

[*To* TESSA]: Don't put yourself forward like that again.

[TESSA *goes back to her corner again.*]

DAWSON

Come, come, Dodd! Don't be so coy! You ought as host to have opened the concert, you know.

LEWIS

Since you will have it.

[*He sits down at the piano again and plays a grand*

*flourish. They compose themselves to listen. He sings*]:

There was a lady loved a swine,
Honey! said she,
Pig-hog, she cried, wilt thou be mine?
Hunks! said he.

[*General discomfort. He sings, not to the old tune, but to a sort of improvised operatic recitative. They look puzzled.*]

MR. M.

[*Amidst a horrible silence from everyone*]: Sounds like an Irish thing. These songs about pigs, you know. You generally find they're Irish! [*Gets a look from* MRS. M. *and subsides.*]

LEWIS

[*Begins second verse*]:

I'll build for thee a silver sty,
Honey! said she.
And in it nobly thou shalt lie.
Hunks! said he.

MRS. L.

Is that—er—translated from the Russian?

LEWIS

[*Solemnly*]: English traditional, Madam. [*Sings third verse*]:

Then stay, good swine, oh, stay with me!
Honey, said she.

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And all my friends shall howl for thee.
Hunks! Hunks! Hunks! said he.

[*There is an awful pause.*]

ROBERTO

Supper con zabaglione.

FLORENCE

[*Rising austerely*]: Shall we go? Millicent, will you lead the way?

[*In solemn procession the entire company stalks out silently.* DAWSON *pauses at door to shake his head disapprovingly at* LEWIS. *As the company disappears through the door* LEWIS *plays the Dead March irreverently and with syncopation.* TESSA, *the last to go, turns with surprising anger.*]

TESSA

Lewis! shut up! It's horrible.

LEWIS

[*Ceasing to play*]: Tessa!

TESSA

Go away. You're drunk—or mad—or both.

LEWIS

Tessa!

[*She closes the door behind her.* LEWIS *bangs the piano viciously.* SIR BARTLEMY PUGH, *who has*

*remained half asleep by the fire, wakes up with a start and applauds vigorously.*]

SIR B.

Bravo! Debussy! Charming! [*He looks round at the empty room*]: Good gad! 'Straordinary thing! Most extraordinary!

LEWIS

Not at all. It's what you all expected.

CURTAIN

## ACT TWO

### Scene II

Scene—*The drawing-room at Strand-on-the-Green. An afternoon four months later.*

[Teresa *is sitting by the fire, surrounded by school books.*]

Tessa

Two minuses make a plus. But then, would two pluses make a minus? Vulgar fractions—what makes a fraction vulgar I'd like to know? Oh dear! [Charles *peeps round the door and she starts up*]: Charles! My only uncle. What a sight for sore eyes!

Charles

Well, baggage? And how are you? [*Kisses her*]: Didn't you expect me? I couldn't possibly miss the great event.

Tessa

[*Sits on the arm of his chair*]: Of course we were expecting you. But not quite so soon. Florence is out, and Lewis is lurking in the studio like a bear with a sore head. Ikey Mo is with him.

CHARLES

Is he jumpy about to-night?

TESSA

Not more than they usually are. He says he's either going to Brussels or Brazil as soon as it's over, to get the taste out of his mouth. Do you want to talk to him, or will you have tea with your only niece?

CHARLES

Tea.

TESSA

[*After launching a shrill flood of Italian through the kitchen door*]: Because I *am* your only niece, in a manner of speaking, now that Lina's gone to Paris.

CHARLES

Is she happy?

TESSA

Very. She always wanted to go on the stage—in France—because she can speak Racine.

CHARLES

I see. And you, my dear? How long are we keeping you at Strand-on-the-Green?

TESSA

Well, I'm going to a finishing school at Harrogate in May. But if it doesn't quite finish me I suppose I'll be back here, off and on, for holidays, till I die.

CHARLES

Oh! Then you're relying on my daughter to house you?

TESSA

You mean—she doesn't want me here?

CHARLES

I never heard her say so. Still, as a guest, you must be a little anxious not to overstay your welcome.

TESSA

A guest?

CHARLES

What is a guest, do you think?

TESSA

A person who's invited.

[ROBERTO *brings in a large tray with kitchen teapot, big cups, a cottage loaf and jam in the jar. He puts it on a little table by the fire and goes out.*]

TESSA

I said the big cups. Men like them. But Charles! Children are forced to be somebody's guests if they have no home of their own. It's part of the undignified state of being a child. [*Gives him some tea.*]

CHARLES

Do you call yourself a child, young woman?

TESSA

I don't. But your daughter, Florence, does.

CHARLES

I see. [*Holds out his cup for sugar*]: Three lumps, if you please, my dear.

TESSA

We mustn't eat too much because we're going to have dinner early, up in town, at a restaurant near the Queen's Hall. Florence said we'd better, so as to be sure not to be late. She's all of a twitter, is Florence.

CHARLES

I don't wonder. It's a very great occasion. So the concert has come at last. To-morrow Lewis will be a great conductor.

TESSA

He is that already.

CHARLES

I suppose so. But I've never seen him.

TESSA

He's a great conductor. And he will be a great composer one day. Tell me; when you said about guests, did you mean that I ought to go away?

CHARLES

[*Hastily*]: Not without consulting your friends, my love. But if there was any profession you wanted to pursue—— [*Holds out his cup for more tea.*]

TESSA

I know. I've none. That's why I'm going to school again.

CHARLES

Then you don't really want to go to school?

TESSA

[*Quietly*]: I can't endure it.

CHARLES

But what's to be done with you, my child?

TESSA

I've no vocation for anything, it seems to me. I love music. But that's not enough. I love apples, but I don't want to be a greengrocer. It's got to be something more than that. Something that comes quite first, so that there isn't any question of a second.

CHARLES

And there's nothing that comes quite first with you?

TESSA

Everybody has something that comes quite first. But sometimes, you know, it's complicated.

CHARLES

I know.

TESSA

Sometimes it's a person who comes first, not a thing. That leads to complications. [*Pause.*]

CHARLES

Oh, come! Most creatures of your age find life an amusing affair.

TESSA

Do they? I doubt it. It's all humbug this idea that young people enjoy themselves so much. It's very tragic to be young, really.

CHARLES

Youth is only tragic when it encounters its destiny too soon. [*Holds out his cup*]: Don't tell me *you're* tragic.

TESSA

[*Filling his cup*]: Most people think I'm comic.

CHARLES

You've wit, my dear, and you've intelligence. You've fine perceptions, sensibility, and the power of making people fond of you. I think your capacity for taking and giving happiness must be enormous.

TESSA

Who am I to give it to?

CHARLES

[*Stirring his tea*]: Education is a good investment.

TESSA

Are you educated?

CHARLES

Comparatively speaking—yes!

TESSA

And are you happy? Happier than an uneducated person?

[CHARLES *hesitates. He takes his spectacles off and twirls them round in a manner he has when lecturing. He has almost forgotten she is a child.*]

CHARLES

Am I happy? [*Thoughtfully*]: I can honestly say—that in such troubles as have come my way—a philosophic outlook—which is the fruit of a liberal education—has been a consolation to me.

TESSA

Could I have a philosophic outlook?

CHARLES

[*Remembering that she is not an undergraduate*]: My dear, a certain amount of unhappiness is bound to come to all of us. But we can fortify ourselves against it by widening our interests. That is the point of education. It enlarges the resources of our minds.

TESSA

I see. Putting your eggs into several baskets instead of only one.

CHARLES

It's safer.

TESSA

Oh, safety! *We* never bother much about that.

CHARLES

Also it enables you to savour the fine enjoyments of civilised society.

TESSA

I'll begin savouring right away if you'll show me how. More tea?

CHARLES

Thank you. I will have a second. [*She grins because he has had four. Pause.*] Do you know, my dear, you're going to grow up into a very charming woman?

TESSA

Yes? And which do you prefer? A charming woman, or one who knows a lot?

CHARLES

Charming women are never ignorant——

TESSA

Charles! Tell the truth! Which is nicer? An ignorant woman with charm or an educated woman without?

CHARLES

You're driving me into a corner.

TESSA

No, I'm not.

CHARLES

Of course the world would stop if women weren't charming, but please God they always will be, however we educate 'em.

TESSA

Oh. I see!

CHARLES

And my dear, the most charming woman I ever knew came to grief, as it seemed to me, simply for want of a wider education—a better regulated mind——
[*Sighs.*]

TESSA

[*Quietly*]: Was that my mother?

CHARLES

Yes, my dear.

TESSA

Were you very fond of her?

CHARLES

Very. And proud of her too.

TESSA

Did she go to a finishing school?

CHARLES

Not she!

TESSA

There you are then!

[LEWIS *and* JACOB *come in, talking eagerly.*]

JACOB

And if this concert is a success, we shall, in three weeks, give another? *Nicht Wahr?* That is a promise?

LEWIS

[*Genially*]: I promise nothing. I never was a man to tie myself. [*To* CHARLES]: How do you do, sir? Got any tea, Tess?

TESSA

I'll send out for fresh. And Lewis, hadn't you better have something solid now? You know you'll eat nothing at dinner. You never do.

LEWIS

Not a bad idea.

[TESSA *takes teapot to kitchen door and gives an order to* ROBERTO, *while* CHARLES *and* JACOB *shake hands.*]

CHARLES

Excellent baggage! You study your husband's stomach. I mean [*hastily*]: you will study it when you have a husband.

[ROBERTO *brings in corned beef and a fresh brew of tea and slaps them down on the table.*]

TESSA

[*Cutting the beef*]: You think this concert's going to be a success, Ike? I don't.

JACOB

*Ach!* I tremble! And why not?

TESSA

Because the people in this country won't like the Symphony in Three Keys. They'll say it hasn't any tune. I'll tell you what you ought to do, if you want Lewis to be a success. You should produce that charade we did at the Karindehütte.

JACOB

I agree. In that charade he permitted himself to write melody. It is so rare a gift. Perhaps one in ten million has got it. But he is that one.

LEWIS

If they don't like what I write they can lump it.

JACOB

Na, na! That is what Sanger has said. And [*shrugging his shoulders*]: his friends must pay his debts.

LEWIS

[*Laughing*]: That's what friends are for!

JACOB

You will write some tunes, Lewis, and then I will give you many concerts; also, perhaps, pay your debts.

LEWIS

I don't want 'em. You can't raise an orchestra over here fit for a cat to conduct.

TESSA

We've had to re-score half the Symphony as it is. Just look at what we've had to do.

[*Hands a big conductor's score off the piano to* JACOB *just as* FLORENCE *comes in dressed for the concert.*]

FLORENCE

Why, Father! I didn't know you'd come. I went straight up to dress. [*Kisses* CHARLES]: I hope they've given you some tea. I've tried six shops for that Brausmann edition, Lewis. I'm afraid we must send to Germany for it.

LEWIS

That's very good of you, my dear. I hope you haven't tired yourself out. Sit down and have some tea.

[FLORENCE *waits till* TESSA *has vacated the place behind the teapot, then she takes it.*]

FLORENCE

[*Coldly to* TESSA]: Thank you. [*To* JACOB]: And how is Tony?

JACOB

Very well, thank you, Mrs. Dodd. She is most disappointed that she cannot come to the concert tonight. But I point out to her it will terribly disturb Lewis if our son is born in the middle of his Symphony.

FLORENCE

[*Hastily*]: Oh, I'm sure you're wise.

TESSA

How do you know it's going to be a son, Ike?

LEWIS

A boy with Sanger's brains and Ike's money might set the Thames on fire.

TESSA

Tony's afraid she'll have a daughter with Ike's face and Sanger's habits.

LEWIS

Morbid! Very morbid! But natural to her condition. [*Waving teacup*]: Health to the *bübchen*, Ike!

FLORENCE

[*Remotely to* CHARLES]: They've put Lewis's Symphony last on the programme to-night. I'm not sure if it's wise.

JACOB

[*Rapidly turning the pages of the score which he has got on his knee*]: I advised it, Mrs. Dodd. My experience—ach, Lewis! What have you done here? [LEWIS *and* TESSA *sit on the arms of his chair and look at the score over his shoulder.*]

TESSA

Ah, I said so. One harp won't do there, will it, Ike? He should score it for three or four.

JACOB

But certainly! Here you have a double orchestra——

LEWIS

You can score for forty harps, but where can I get them? I told Dawson I wanted three to-night——

FLORENCE

[*Trying to join in*]: Dr. Dawson told me he didn't think more than one was needed.

LEWIS

[*Ignoring her*]: I said the bassoons at the end of the scherzo——

TESSA

Sanger said——

LEWIS

Were much too heavy for the strings. What, Tessa?

TESSA

Sanger said the bassoons in that scherzo were like channel steamers in a fog.

[LEWIS *and* JACOB *laugh.*]

JACOB

For your next concert you shall have six harps. That I promise you.

LEWIS

You seem mighty hopeful about another concert, Ike. I expect Tessa's right. They'll howl me down.

FLORENCE

Oh, nonsense, Lewis. There's no more broad-minded public in the world than——

JACOB

Ach, yes! They will howl you down. But consider that in England it is a success to be howled down. To-night they will howl, and to the next concert will come all those who have not howled to see what it is like. Every seat will be sold.

CHARLES

You call that a success?

JACOB

[*Simply*]: For me, it will be a success.

LEWIS

You're inimitable, Ike. But to-night will be enough for me.

TESSA

Yes. If we ever get through to-night——

FLORENCE

[*Breaking in, in a high strained voice*]: Need we go on talking about to-night? Aren't we nervous enough already?

JACOB

You are not so used to it as we, Mrs. Dodd.

FLORENCE

Stop blowing on your tea, Tessa. It's vulgar.

TESSA

Sorry.

FLORENCE

And why must you drag your hair back in that way? It's terribly unbecoming. Your forehead is quite high enough as it is. Why don't you cover it?

TESSA

If I did I'd look like one of those little girls in shops, called Cash. Wouldn't I, gentlemen?

CHARLES

If you want to look pretty, hussy, you'd better grow a fringe and hide it. Personally I like the way she does her hair.

LEWIS

So do I.

JACOB

I also.

TESSA

[*Complacently*]: My admirers are mostly of the opposite sex.

LEWIS

It's for your good that Florence talks in this strain. You ought to be grateful. I've often thought it a pity you had such a high-stomached opinion of yourself.

FLORENCE

She must learn not to be such a baby for her age.

LEWIS

Will she have to play hockey at Harrogate, Florence?

CHARLES

Not unless she's fit for it.

JACOB

[*Looking up from the score which he is still reading*]: In England one must always be running about after a ball! I think the football is better than the golf ball only because it is larger.

TESSA

I think England is a detestable country. [*She goes over to the window and stands there, staring out.*]

LEWIS

So do I. I'm leaving it as soon as this concert is over, and I've good a mind never to come back.

FLORENCE

What nonsense, Lewis!

JACOB

If the concert is a success, I shall not allow you to go.

LEWIS

[*To* CHARLES]: Didn't Florence tell you that we had almost agreed to part?

CHARLES

It is fortunate that you can agree upon so delicate a point.

FLORENCE

Don't listen to him, Father. He's talking nonsense.

LEWIS

I'm talking sound sense. And everyone sees it but you. You won't live permanently out of England and I won't live permanently in it.

JACOB

To live permanently anywhere must, I think, be difficult for Lewis.

FLORENCE

This is a profitless discussion. Tessa! Is that entrance paper finished?

TESSA

[*Without turning round*]: Not yet.

FLORENCE

Then go and do it. It has to be sent in to-morrow. Go into the dining-room. And remember that you can't go out to-night unless it's finished. How much have you still left?

TESSA

Arithmetic, Scripture, and English literature.

FLORENCE

My good child! Then you'll miss the concert tonight.

LEWIS and CHARLES

Florence!

FLORENCE

I gave her those papers a week ago.

JACOB

But, Mrs. Dodd! This concert! It is a unique occasion.

FLORENCE

It's her own fault. She wastes her time. Go along, Tessa.

TESSA

She doesn't really mean it. Her bark is worse than her bite.

FLORENCE

Yes. I do mean it. Please don't make any mistake about that.

[*She speaks so sharply that* TESSA *backs away from her frightened. Everybody looks uncomfortable.* TESSA, *crestfallen, turns to go out of the room L.*]

TESSA

[*To* LEWIS *in a low voice as she goes past*]: Well, if I'm not there I'll hold my thumbs for you all the time.

LEWIS

[*Pulling her hair*]: Cheer up, Cinderella.

CHARLES

What does he mean by that?

TESSA

[*Darkly*]: He's too clever. That's what's the matter with him. *Lieber Herr?*

CHARLES

Yes, baggage?

TESSA

May one ask how long you are staying with us?

CHARLES

About twenty hours.

TESSA

Dear me! That's uncommonly short. I'd hoped you'd stay long enough to give me a philosophic outlook.

CHARLES

You come and stay with me in Cambridge. And then—who knows?

TESSA

[*Nodding at him*]: Who knows?

CHARLES

My housekeeper can't make tea like yours.

TESSA

Sack her.

FLORENCE

When are you going to begin that paper, Tessa?

TESSA

This very instant!

[*Runs out, humming: "Ah, say not so!"*]

JACOB

I think you must let her come to the concert to-night, Mrs. Dodd. We shall all miss her so much.

FLORENCE

It rests with her. If she has finished her paper, she will come.

JACOB

Ah well! [*Shrugs his shoulders*]: I must now go, or Tony will be impatient. *Auf Wiedersehen*, until to-night.

FLORENCE

If you want to get off before the rest of us, Lewis, you'd better dress now.

LEWIS

I'll go.

[LEWIS *gets up and goes out with* JACOB.]

CHARLES

[*Turning on* FLORENCE]: My dear! You are heading straight for disaster. I'd no idea things were as bad as this.

FLORENCE

What do you mean?

CHARLES

Your manner to that little girl! Nothing can justify it.

FLORENCE

I think it's a pity that you encourage her, Father. That pert manner may be very amusing, but it will get her into trouble later on.

CHARLES

You would get on much better if only you would treat her as if she was a reasonable person.

FLORENCE

How can I, when she behaves like a young hooligan? [*Pause.*] I don't like her.

CHARLES

[*Sternly*]: That's the trouble. And you show it. Is that just?

FLORENCE

I've tried. But she has such a disagreeable nature. So forward—so flippant——

CHARLES

Try to see things a little from her point of view. Think how she's been brought up. She's quite untaught. She has only her affections and her quick wits to guide her. Fortunately these are singularly uncorrupted.

FLORENCE

[*Sombrely*]: Are they?

CHARLES

They are, if you remember the sort of life she has been used to. She's been flung into an entirely new world. She has to pick up all our ideas piecemeal as she goes along. At one moment she's rebuked for telling a lie, and at the next for blowing on her tea. She has to sort out for herself the relative values of all these new laws. Can you wonder that she finds it hard?

FLORENCE

You think I'm unfair?

CHARLES

I think you are, my love. And it distresses me, when I think of the generous-minded woman you used to be.

FLORENCE

Lewis thinks I'm unfair too.

CHARLES

[*Hesitatingly*]: I think he is very fond of her.

FLORENCE

He's fond of anything that is Sanger.

CHARLES

He is concerned for her happiness. You should respect that concern, Florence. He is not, I imagine, a man who feels affection easily.

FLORENCE

Thank you. I know all about Lewis and his feelings. [*Pause.*] I never thought you'd take their part against me.

CHARLES

My dear!

FLORENCE

She's the kind of girl that men always defend. The kind that's called "a good sort."

CHARLES

And she is a good sort.

FLORENCE

She's not. She's not to be trusted. You can't trust any of those girls. They've got bad blood in them. She'll go wrong as fast as ever she can, unless she's watched. Sometimes I wonder if already——

CHARLES

You're mad! You're letting yourself go to pieces. Don't let Lewis hear you speak like that.

FLORENCE

Why not?

CHARLES

Because, if you don't take care, you'll bully those two into making a bolt of it.

FLORENCE

[*Warding off the suggestion with her hand as if it was a blow*]: Oh, no, no! You're quite mistaken.

CHARLES

Very well! I've warned you.

FLORENCE

He couldn't—he wouldn't—— [TESSA *comes in, clutching a pile of school books.*] What do you want? I thought I told you to go to the dining-room.

TESSA

There's no fire there. I'm cold. Can't I work here?

FLORENCE

[*To* CHARLES]: Hadn't you better go and dress now, Father? We'll be starting very soon.

CHARLES

Perhaps I had. [*To* TESSA]: I'll hurl my clothes on and then I'll come and do your sums for you, my dear.

[CHARLES *goes and* ROBERTO *comes in to clear away tea.*]

FLORENCE

[*In Italian*]: Lay out cold supper before you go, Roberto.

TESSA

Are you going to the concert, Roberto? Lucky hound.

FLORENCE

[*In Italian*]: And leave everything as usual.

ROBERTO

Si, Madame!

[ROBERTO *goes out.*]

TESSA

Florence! I can't stay all by myself in the house.

FLORENCE

I think it's better in any case that you should stay quietly at home. You're not looking well. You'd only have palpitations at the concert.

TESSA

Really I'm quite well.

FLORENCE

And another time perhaps you'll stick to your work better.

TESSA

Oh! [*With a little sob*]: There won't be another time. Florence! Listen! I must go!

FLORENCE

[*Coldly*]: I sha'n't take you.

TESSA

Then I shall go by myself. I've got money. I shall go the minute you've left the house.

FLORENCE

You will not—either at this or at any other time. [*Reënter* CHARLES *in a dressing-gown.*]

CHARLES

Florence, I have forgotten my dress studs.

FLORENCE

[*Smiling*]: Have you ever remembered them on any visit you ever paid, Father?

CHARLES

These public functions are most detestable things.

FLORENCE

I think I know where Lewis has some. I'll look. [FLORENCE *goes out with* CHARLES. TESSA, *left alone,*

*puts her head down on the table and sobs. Hearing someone coming, she pulls herself together, and bends over her sums.* LEWIS, *with his clothes flung on anyhow and all his hair on end, rushes in waving a tie.*]

LEWIS

Florence! This tie—— Oh, it's you, Tess! Tie it for me, there's a good girl!

TESSA

[*Dealing with it*]: Do you remember that concert in Paris when we had to make you a tie out of my hair ribbon?

LEWIS

Where are the snows of yesteryear?

TESSA

[*Patting tie and standing back*]: There!

LEWIS

Am I neat?

TESSA

You look like a calf going garlanded to the sacrifice. Never mind! It'll soon be over.

LEWIS

Very soon. Where shall we be this time to-morrow?

TESSA

You'll be in Brussels or Brazil, unless you're an almighty liar. By the way, you might pass your eye

over this sum of mine. I've papered this room nine times and——

LEWIS

Why do it at all?

TESSA

The answer comes out that it would take five million yards of paper to paper a room twenty foot square. Is that right?

LEWIS

Let me look at it. My good girl! You've papered it absolutely solid. You needn't find the cubic contents of the room. [*He does the sum*]: Of course you'll run away, I suppose?

TESSA

I've nowhere to run.

LEWIS

[*Picking up another exercise book*]: What's this?

TESSA

Leave that alone! That's my diary.

LEWIS

Let me, Tessa! I was reading something about myself! Am I often mentioned?

TESSA

Sometimes. [*Snatches book away and sits on it*]: Let's get on with these sums. "Two trains are passing

one another at equal rates"—— Oh dear! Oh dear! What shall I do? What shall I do? I can't! I can't bear it!

LEWIS

Come with me! Dearest, dearest Tessa! Don't cry! Don't let them make you cry! Come with me!

TESSA

[*Tearfully*]: Come with you? Where?

LEWIS

Anywhere. Brussels! When I go after the concert.

TESSA

Florence would never allow it.

LEWIS

[*Taken aback*]: No. You'd have to do it without leave.

TESSA

You mean, really, that we should run away?

LEWIS

Yes. I shall catch the night boat. Couldn't you get away and come too?

TESSA

Well! There are points in it. [*Pause.*] It's nice of you to be so concerned about me.

LEWIS

No. Not very nice of me. It's for my own sake that I want you to come.

TESSA

Couldn't you let me have it in plain English?

LEWIS

In plain English, I love you. You're too dear to leave behind.

TESSA

Love me? What do you mean by that? There's a song: *Away false man, I know thou lov'st! I know thou lov'st too many.*

LEWIS

[*Confused*]: No, Tessa. This is a star part. A solo.

TESSA

Looks to me more like a trio. Why did you marry Florence?

LEWIS

You know why.

TESSA

Yes, I do know. If you loved me, it was unfair to both of us. That's why I'm complaining.

LEWIS

It's done now.

TESSA

And you want it undone. Why couldn't you have thought of all this before? You were so mad to get her that you forgot all about me. If you'd waited a bit——

LEWIS

If I'd waited—then—then—— Oh, Tessa say it!

TESSA

I loved you. Of course I did. I promised myself to you ever so long ago, when first I ever began to think about love. I thought then that I wouldn't ever love any man but you. And I don't think I ever will. But it's too late now.

LEWIS

No. It's not too late if you still love me.

TESSA

What's that got to do with it? I can't now. Because of Florence. I'm her cousin, I've lived in her house; you belong to her. I'd feel mean. She's been very good to me, though lately she's been a bit snappy, and I don't wonder, with you going on the way you do.

LEWIS

She's treated you abominably.

TESSA

Still, I'd feel very mean if I ran off with her husband. [*Grandly, with an eye on her diary*]: The pangs of unappeased remorse would gnaw my vitals.

LEWIS

I should think it was obvious to any one that Florence and I can't get on together. We must part. I expect she'll be very glad to get rid of me.

TESSA

I expect she will. But that's not my affair. I'm not saying you hadn't better go. And if you go I expect you'll want another wife. But she can't be me. Everybody would know. And they'd say we'd been carrying on here behind poor Florence's back. It would be awful for her. She'd think I was a traitor. Really I couldn't. I don't want to be a viper in anybody's bosom.

LEWIS

Will you stop talking in that strain?

TESSA

It's a very good strain. A person must do what they think right, mustn't they?

LEWIS

You have changed, these last months!

TESSA

I suppose I have. It's not my fault. Nobody can help changing. Things are done to us and we change. We can't go back. I wish we could. I'm sorry I ever came to England and this life. But as I'm here I'd better stay and see it through. I shall stay until I have a philosophic outlook.

LEWIS

What's the good of that if you're unhappy?

TESSA

[*In the voice of* CHARLES:] A certain amount of unhappiness is bound to come to every one of us. [*Softly*]: I don't believe we'd escape it, Lewis, in one another's company.

LEWIS

Nor do I. But I want your company.

TESSA

Then want must be your master. I've said my say.

LEWIS

There's been plenty of it.

TESSA

Well, you want to know such a lot.

LEWIS

Only one thing. And I don't know it yet. Do you still love me?

TESSA

[*Provocatively*]: M'm.

LEWIS

Say "Cross-my-heart-hope-I-may-die-if-I-don't."

TESSA

Cross my heart—he thought I should, yes, but I sha'n't! [*Edging away to the door, whisks out before he has time to catch her.*]

[*He finds her diary, however, left in a chair, and takes it over to the window to read. Stands there, reading and looking out at the river.* FLORENCE, *in an opera cloak, comes in.*]

FLORENCE

Lewis! I thought you'd gone.

LEWIS

[*Absently, still reading diary*]: Not yet.

FLORENCE

Lewis—are you going away to-night? If—if you feel you want a little holiday alone, I shall understand. This concert—I know it's a strain.

[*He looks at her in surprise. Then he throws the diary on a sofa and goes across to her.*]

LEWIS

Yes. I am going. It's generous of you to understand. [*Takes her hand, and looks into her face*]: Florence! I'm afraid—you've had a poor time of it with me.

FLORENCE

[*Gently*]: I've made mistakes, perhaps.

LEWIS

[*Excited*]: Florence! You're so good—— Is it too late now to tell you something very important?

FLORENCE

No, no! Tell me! What is it?

LEWIS

When I'm gone I wish you could be better friends with her.

FLORENCE

[*Shrinking*]: With Tessa?

LEWIS

[*Eagerly*]: Everybody loves her, I think, who really knows her. If you knew how she speaks and thinks of you, then you'd love her too. I don't think you quite understand how—how good she is.

FLORENCE

No, I don't quite understand.

LEWIS

But try! Do try! I know I'm a bad advocate. I know I've behaved badly. This marriage of ours has been a wretched business. I'd better go away. I've only made you unhappy and I should go on making you unhappy. But the worst of it is that somehow I've put you and Tessa against each other.

FLORENCE

Oh, Lewis! Lewis! What does Tessa matter just now? This is the great moment in your career. And you will go on harping about Tessa, who doesn't really concern you at all.

LEWIS

She does concern me enormously. I love her so much! I want to be sure she'll be happy when I've gone away. I have to leave her with you and you treat her as if she was an enemy. What can I say? You're so much better fitted to love each other, you two, than I am to have anything to do with either of you. Oh, Florence! If only I could be sure of this, I'd go away and say God bless you both.

FLORENCE

[*Sitting down, and speaking very quietly*]: Since when have you loved her so terribly?

LEWIS

I can't remember. Always, I suppose.

FLORENCE

Why, then, did you marry me?

LEWIS

I was a fool.

FLORENCE

Does she know?

LEWIS

Yes. She knows. And you knew it too? Didn't you? Didn't you? You've known it for a long time. And you were angry because I didn't speak the truth about it, weren't you?

FLORENCE

I can see no good in going into all this now, Lewis. You'll make yourself unfit for the concert to-night.

LEWIS

Don't put me off! I want to make you understand.

FLORENCE

You may as well tell me the whole story then. What exactly has there been between you?

LEWIS

I've told you. I love her.

FLORENCE

What do you mean by that? Is she your mistress?

LEWIS

Florence! [*Pause.*] No! she's not. She won't have anything to do with me, because of you. I've told you.

FLORENCE

[*Deliberately*]: I don't believe you.

LEWIS

It's true. She would never be so unjust to you.

FLORENCE

[*Her voice rising*]: I've seen enough of the whole pack of you to know that you can't be trusted.

LEWIS

You're making a wicked mistake.

FLORENCE

[*Suddenly losing control*]: I think she's too—too contemptible! She's no better than Tony. This sort of thing was bound to happen sooner or later, I suppose. I should have foreseen it. I don't blame her. She's just an unfortunate little animal. It's you I'll never forgive.

LEWIS

Oh, yes, you would, my dear. You'd forgive me anything.

FLORENCE

Never again after this! Never again! Don't touch me.

LEWIS

Oh, yes! As often as I want. [*Seizes her by the shoulders*]: You would. You would. I needn't have married you. You'd have taken me without.

FLORENCE

I hate you! I loathe you!

LEWIS

Women like you are fond of saying that. It means nothing. I know your sort. You've pretty ways. You go about as if the earth wasn't good enough for you. But you'll eat dirt to get the man you want. There's nothing you won't stoop to.

FLORENCE

[*Hoarsely*]: Get away! Get out!

LEWIS

And when you've got him you want to make him as low as yourselves. You want to shut him up. Like a caged beast. In a sty. A silver sty.

FLORENCE

I pray to God I may never see you again.

LEWIS

I've heard that before too.

FLORENCE

I hope you treat her like this. I hope you make her suffer like this.

LEWIS

Tessa? [*Flings her from him*]: She's not like the rest of you. She has some pride. If I tried my fascinating ways on her, she'd give me a black eye.

FLORENCE

Go! Go! I've done with you!

[TESSA *taps on the door, and appears looking rather frightened. A dull pause.*]

LEWIS

Hullo, Tessa.

TESSA

Who won the battle of Waterloo?

LEWIS

That I'll never know. Shakespeare when he crossed the Alps.

[LEWIS *goes.* FLORENCE *crosses to the glass over the mantelpiece and stares at herself.*]

TESSA

[*Hesitates a moment*]: Florence! The taxi is here. Charles is waiting. [FLORENCE *stares at her silently*]: Florence! Why are you so cruel to me? You don't mean that I mustn't come to the concert? Not really?

FLORENCE

[*Still partially stunned*]: What?

TESSA

[*Both hands pressed over her heart*]: I won't have palpitations. I won't give any trouble. But Lewis would be so disappointed if——

[*The front door is heard to bang.*]

FLORENCE

Lewis is gone.

TESSA

Gone? Oh! [*Bursts into tears*]: And he's never coming back! I never even said good-bye!

FLORENCE

What's that to you? Aren't you ashamed of yourself?

TESSA

[*In surprise*]: Ashamed?

FLORENCE

[*Quick and low*]: Yes! Ashamed! Do you think I haven't seen—what's been going on all these months? I've seen it and I've tried to ignore it because it's so—so odious. I've tried to excuse you, because you were too young to know what you were doing.

TESSA

What have I been doing?

FLORENCE

I'll speak this once and then we'll never mention this again. Teresa, you must know that, among decent people, the woman who openly pursues a man, especially a man who doesn't particularly care for her, is despised by everybody. She loses all her dignity—her self-respect——

TESSA

What has all this got to do with me? I haven't been pursuing a man who doesn't particularly care for me. I agree with you. It's a mug's game.

FLORENCE

You know perfectly well that you have. It's been perfectly obvious to everyone.

TESSA

I love him very much. I always have. And, perhaps, anyone could see it. But what you say is not true.

FLORENCE

It is true. Your uncle has just spoken of it to me. And—and Lewis himself——

TESSA

Oh, no, Florence. You haven't understood——

FLORENCE

It's odious that I should have to take you to task for your manner to my husband——

TESSA

I'll have to take you to task for your manner to me. I don't think you really mean it, but I won't have these things said to me. It's not my fault that I love Lewis. I did long before you came to the Tyrol. It isn't a happy thing at all. It's brought nothing but sadness

into my life. But it's so much all of me that I couldn't want it to be different any more than I could want to be changed into another person. And I've come to understand lately that, now he's your husband, I'd better not see him any more. That's why I've agreed to go away.

FLORENCE

Agreed! You're going because I mean to put an end to this—this disgraceful intrigue.

TESSA

[*Alarmed*]: I don't understand! Intrigue! [*Backing away*]: You're making a mistake. Something terrible has happened! You don't mean all this. Because I love him——

FLORENCE

[*Taking a step toward her*]: Don't you dare to speak of love. You don't know what it means.

TESSA

[*With a sigh*]: I know all about it.

FLORENCE

[*Her voice rising*]: What do you mean by that? [*Seizes* TESSA's *wrists and pushes her back*]: What do you mean? What do you mean?

TESSA

Don't! Don't! What's the matter with you, Florence?

FLORENCE

What do you mean?

TESSA

Don't look at me like that! I've done you no harm. What did you think I'd done?

FLORENCE

[*Almost screaming*]: I knew it. I've always known it. You've betrayed me, the pair of you—under my very roof—all these nights—when I thought he was working. In my house—my own house!

TESSA

Well, then, let me get out of your house.

FLORENCE

[*Beside herself*]: How often has he——? D'you know the name for girls like you?

TESSA

[*Terrified*]: Florence! Stop! I'm not! I'm not!

FLORENCE

Yes, you are! You're a harlot! A harlot! Just a common little tart, and nothing else!

[CHARLES *is heard calling for* FLORENCE *outside. She throws* TESSA *backward on to the divan and goes out, locking the door.* TESSA *bangs on the door. She runs from the doors to the window in frantic distress.*]

TESSA

Let me out! Oh, let me out! I must get away from this! Oh, Mother—Mother—— [*She is just going to jump from the window when a key clicks in the kitchen door.*]

[ROBERTO *appears in his best clothes, a bowler, and carrying an umbrella.*]

ROBERTO

Scusi! She forgetta to locka me in too!

[*He grins broadly and holds out her party frock. With a sobbing laugh she falls on his neck.*]

TESSA

Roberto. Dear Roberto!

CURTAIN

# ACT THREE

## ACT THREE

### Scene I

Scene—*The Artistes' Room at Queen's Hall, London. A somewhat cheerless room, although brightly lighted by a central chandelier and wall brackets by the fireplace R. Door to the room is centre, there is a passage beyond, and away to the L is the way to the stage. It is possible to hear music and applause whenever the door is opened. Door down L leads to gentlemen's dressing-rooms.*

[*An* Usher *sitting at the table, pricking off winners in the racing column of a newspaper. The* Hall Fireman *comes in through the door. A strain of music is wafted in with him.*]

Fireman

Just finishing, mate!

Usher

Right oh! [*Folds up paper in a leisurely manner.*]

Fireman

They seem to like this one.

USHER

Looks like it. These young fellers are all alike to me. They used to 'ave long names and long 'air; an' now they 'ave short names and short 'air. That's about all.

FIREMAN

Ah! These young artists! They don't know what work is. Why, I can remember Sousa—— What's yer fancy for the National? They tell me a good double——

USHER

I never give tips. I got my own troubles.

FIREMAN

I suppose we shall 'ave the usual crowd in, squeaking themselves hoarse!

USHER

Funny thing! All the years I bin 'ere, I never hear any one say anything new.

FIREMAN

Ah! [*Pause.*] There's a queer fish 'ere. Found 'im trying to get down the gallery emergency. Didn't seem to understand when I told 'im it was locked. Eye-talian by the looks of 'im.

USHER

What's he want?

FIREMAN

He's got a note or something for Mr. Dodd.

USHER

That's the conductor.

FIREMAN

[*Indifferently*]: Oh, 'im! [*Calls*]: Come in, Jacko.

[ROBERTO *comes in, excited and mysterious.*]

ROBERTO

Scusi! When concerto 'e finish, I musta see Mr. Dodd. Yes. It is ver' important.

USHER

You give me the message. I'll see he gets it.

ROBERTO

No! No! It is ver' important. I have-a da young lady for 'im. She wait 'ere? Yes?

USHER

Who are you?

ROBERTO

Scusi? I am da butler. I ver' important. [TESSA, *looking pale and ill, appears at the back. She carries a brown paper parcel, already half burst open.*] [*Grandly*]: Dis is da Signorina!

TESSA

Ssh! Roberto! Don't make such a noise. It isn't over yet. Listen! [*She stands enraptured, showing on*

*her face that she knows every bar of* Lewis's *Symphony. Nodding her head sagely*]: He's doing it very nicely.

Usher

Look 'ere, miss! You've no business——

Tessa

[*Imperiously*]: Ssh! Now the last four bars! [*In a moment the Symphony ceases*]: Oh, grand! Bravo, Lewis! [*In her excitement she drops her parcel, clasping her hands together.*]

Roberto

Magnifico! Magnifico!

Tessa

Shut up! Listen! Don't they like it?

[*An anxious moment, and then a perfectly deafening burst of applause.*]

Fireman

Look out! Here they come!

[*He disappears down the corridor.*]

Tessa

[*Suddenly panic-stricken*]: I must wait! I must wait till they've all gone! It'd only upset everybody.

Roberto

[*Watching at door of corridor*]: Kvick! He comes. Others comes too.

TESSA

Where can I go? Quick?

USHER

You'll 'ave me in the Divorce and Probate before you've done. 'Ere you are. Pop in the "Gents cloaks." Nobody'll look for you there.

TESSA

Give him this, Roberto. [*Gives* ROBERTO *a little note and disappears through door down L.*]

[LEWIS, *moving like a man in a dream, charges into the room and pulls up at the sight of* ROBERTO.]

LEWIS

Roberto! Do you have to be here?

ROBERTO

Magnifico, Lewis! Magnifico! Ah! I wish so much that Sanger was here.

LEWIS

You heard it then?

ROBERTO

Si, si. In Balcone. Alla your friends here to-night, I tink.

LEWIS

[*With a sudden look of grief*]: One wasn't.

ROBERTO

[*Gleefully*]: No, no! You make-a mistake. *Ecco!* [*Holds up the note.*]

LEWIS

From Tessa?

ROBERTO

Si!

LEWIS

Did she come after all? I wish I'd known. [*Tearing open note and reading*]: Oh, bring her down. As fast as ever you can. Quick!
[ROBERTO *bursts into laughter.*]

USHER

[*Touching* LEWIS *on the shoulder*]: Going on, sir? They're shouting for yer.

LEWIS

Let 'em. I've a train to catch.

USHER

But, sir!

LEWIS

Go on yourself.

USHER

Work before play. Ain't that right, Jacko?

LEWIS

Oh, all right. Look here! There's a young lady I'm expecting.

USHER

[*With a knowing smile*]: Oh, yes, sir?

LEWIS

Shut up! You don't understand. Look after her till I come back.

USHER

Well, it's not my business to——

LEWIS

Here! Take this! [*Gives* USHER *coin.*]

USHER

[*Looking at it*]: Excuse me, sir! That's a n'a'penny!

LEWIS

Lord! Lord! [*Gives him half a crown and hurries off*]: When you've got her, mount guard at the door, Roberto, and don't budge.

USHER

[*Looking after him*]: Mad! Mad as a Natter.

[TESSA'S *head appears round the cloak-room door. The* USHER *waves her back.* ROBERTO *firmly plants himself in the very middle of the doorway.*]

FIREMAN

[*Poking his head round corridor*]: Feedin' time in the monkey 'ouse.

USHER

'Ere, Jacko! Shift a bit. Nobody can't git past you.

ROBERTO

[*Very excited*]: I will notta go. I will stay 'ere alla da night. I have been told to stay, and I will stay.

USHER

Oh, Lord! Come 'ere! Wait 'ere! [*Points downward with his finger at the spot he has selected*]: *Restez la!*

ROBERTO

You spik French?

USHER

When it's wanted. [*Loftily.*]

[*A crowd of excited people are talking in the passage outside and pushing into the room, including* DAWSON, SIR BARTLEMY, MILLICENT, *the* LEYBURNS *and the* MAINWARINGS. *Applause goes on, off stage, throughout the scene.*]

DAWSON

Well, Pugh? What do you make of it, hey?

SIR B.

Ah, these young men! These young men!

DAWSON

Never heard such a filthy hullabaloo in your life, did you?

SIR B.

Every young man writes one symphony as bad as that. Our friend Dodd is no exception.

DAWSON

So that's your line?

SIR B.

He'll get over it. I wrote something very like that myself once.

DAWSON

[*Derisively*]: I don't believe you!

MILLICENT

[*Pressing forward*]: Well? Well? Startling, isn't it?

SIR B.

I've no doubt he means it to be startling.

MILLICENT

Personally I feel as if I'd fallen down three flights of stairs. You don't call it music, do you?

SIR B.

I don't.

DAWSON

I do!

MILLICENT

Those drums!

SIR B.

Just like having the plumbers in, wasn't it?

MILLICENT

But to call it music! It's not like any music I ever heard.

DAWSON

No, Madam. But it's like music that you will hear.

SIR B.

My dear Dawson!

DAWSON

I'm not yer dear Dawson.

SIR B.

Beauty and violence cannot exist together.

DAWSON

They're inseparable.

[MRS. LEYBURN *claps her hands at this pronouncement, trying to look like a Bacchante, in spite of a Liberty scarf.*]

MRS. L.

But surely, Sir Bartlemy, you'll admit that he's a magnificent conductor.

SIR B.

Able! Very able!

DAWSON

Finest conducting we've seen here since Richter retired. [*Going over to look out of door*]: Have those fellows in there eaten him? Oh, no——

[*Makes way for* LEWIS, *who drifts back into the room, quite bewildered to find so many people there. The whole company falls upon him.*]

MILLICENT

*Together*

Congratulations, Lewis! You've set 'em all by the ears.

MR. L.

Bravo! Bravo! The most marvellous thing that ever happened!

LEWIS

[*Politely and absently*]: Thank you!

MRS. M.

I'm so proud to think that I've been at your first English concert.

MR. M.

Jolly good I call it. Jolly fine. Afraid I don't know much about it, you know, but it knocked 'em all right.

LEWIS

Thank you.

MRS. L.

It's a great moment in our lives.

SIR B.

Most interesting. It's been most interesting.

LEWIS

Thank you. [*Catches the eye of* DAWSON *and comes to the surface for a moment*]: Dawson! That first fiddle of yours is a fool. You ought to sack him.

DAWSON

[*Putting a friendly arm over his shoulder*]: They don't understand a note of it, my dear fellow. For which you should praise the good God who made you.

MR. L.

[*Squeaking*]: It was amazing! It's gone to my head like——

MRS. M.

Like champagne!

SIR B.

H'm! Raw spirit!

MR. L.

I want to shout! I want to sing! I want to throw my hat in the air. I want to run into Oxford Street and knock policemen on the head! He is the one god, and I am his prophet.

DAWSON

[*In an audible undertone*]: Can nothing be done to stop that fellow? [*Going to* LEWIS]: What's that? From an admirer, signed "Lover of Good Music." You mustn't start that game. [*Indicates note which is still in* LEWIS's *hand.*]

LEWIS

[*Crushing up note in hand*]: I'm not starting anything. Are they going to stop here all night, Dawson?

DAWSON

[*Catching sight of* LEWIS's *face*]: Lord, man! Have you come into a legacy?

LEWIS

[*In a low voice*]: Something like it.

[CHARLES, FLORENCE, *and* JACOB *come in.* ROBERTO *creeps out* L.]

JACOB

[*Shouting*]: A thousand million bravos. How Tony will be pleased! It is a great beginning! Not one of them know what to think, what to say. You will, to-morrow, be famous.

LEWIS

[*In a gale of high spirits, parodying* JACOB'S *manner*]: *Ach mein lieb wurdig Birnbaum! Wunderbar! Erstaunlich! Ach! ich bin so glücklich! Ach, wie glücklich bin ich!*

JACOB

*Ja, ja!* But listen to them, how they are shouting!

MILLICENT

[*Advancing on* JACOB]: Isn't it too marvellous, Mr. Birnbaum? You certainly have been a good friend to our family.

JACOB

Ach yes! Do I not know genius when I see it? It was I, *gnädige Frau*, who discovered Sanger.

CHARLES

[*Going up to* LEWIS]: A thousand congratulations, Lewis! I don't know one note from another, but I

can see that you've succeeded in frightening the farmyard.

LEWIS

[*Radiant, nearly shaking his arm off*]: Thank you, sir! Thank you!

[FLORENCE *comes up to* LEWIS *a little shyly, and trying to seem casual. She is mortally afraid that he will make a scene and she wants to secure an immediate retreat if he does.*]

FLORENCE

I was in two minds whether to come round or not. But I had to come, Lewis, to tell you how *very* good it was.

LEWIS

[*In his polite, sleep-walker's tone*]: Thank you! [*He suddenly disentangles her from the mass of people who are harassing him, and looks astonished*]: Florence! You here?

FLORENCE

[*Very brightly and nervously*]: Yes! Me here!

USHER

[*To* LEWIS]: You'll have to take another call, sir. They're shouting the place down.

LEWIS

What? Again? Oh, all right.

[LEWIS *goes off again.*]

FLORENCE

[*To* MILLICENT]: He doesn't approve of relations coming round, you know. I wonder he hasn't turned us all out.

MILLICENT

He's in a very mild mood to-night. Success agrees with him.

FLORENCE

I really came round because I want to make up a little party.

MR. L.

Bravo! Let's celebrate! By all means!

FLORENCE

I've collected some people already—they're waiting in the foyer. Dr. Dawson! You'll come, won't you?

DAWSON

I'll go anywhere where I can get a drink.

MRS. L.

Let's be really Bohemian for once and go to the Eiffel Tower!

FLORENCE

Oh, yes! Let's! And you must all be my guests, please! Lydia! You'll come? And Roberto? And you, Mr. Birnbaum?

MILLICENT

[*Maliciously*]: Will Lewis come?

FLORENCE

I think we must persuade him.

[LEWIS *comes back, his tie more crooked than ever.*]

JACOB

[*Again falling upon him*]: Ach! It is as I have said! They will all scream at you, and the next concert will be packed. This adventurer! This ignoramus, who beats the drum and shouts like children at play. Noise! So much ugly noise! What is music coming to? Let us all go and hear this terrible Dodd. That is the way. Now I arrange it. The next concert——

LEWIS

There won't be a next concert, Ike. I'm going away.

ALL

Going away?

JACOB

Ach, you must not go away! You must now stay here. I have told you that you must stay here, if this concert is a success. Listen! In three weeks, another concert here. And then to Hamburg for the festival——

LEWIS

[*Looking again at the letter which he still holds in his hand and smiling a little*]: No, no. No more concerts here. I'm not coming back here any more. I have to go. At once.

[*Throughout the ensuing contest he is never violent, but he speaks with the absolute determination of a man who is under the influence of a completely dominating passion.* Tessa *and music have become identified in his mind, and both are drawing him away. The conflict is over, and these people, including* Florence, *are so unimportant that he has no need to fight them.*]

Mr. L.

You mustn't go, Dodd! You must stay here with us. We are your people now.

Lewis

[*Shaking his head*]: No. You're not my people.

Jacob

Your fate must keep you here! You cannot fight it.

Lewis

My fate must take me away, and I'm in a hurry.

Dawson

Don't be a jackass.

Sir B.

[*Unable to help joining in*]: Really Dodd! Don't you think this is very unwise?

Lewis

I've never been wise before.

JACOB

But it is madness! It is raving madness! You will lose all that you have gained.

LEWIS

What have I gained, Ike?

JACOB

[*Tearing his hair and shaking his fists to heaven*]: Never again! Never again will I do anything for such a man!

CHARLES

Is this a good moment to discuss this question? Aren't we all a little over-excited? I should have thought to-morrow——

JACOB

Yes, yes. This is not the time. To-morrow he will hear reason. To-morrow we will speak of this again.

LEWIS

I'm sorry, Ike. I'm afraid I must go to-night.
[*The* USHER *touches his arm.*]

USHER

Just once more for the gallery. We put the lights out on 'em once.

LEWIS

[*As he goes*]: But this is absurd, I——
[*He goes off again.*]

MILLICENT

How like Lewis! He always upsets his own apple-cart. When he was six weeks old he was sick all over his rich godfather. And that's been his line ever since.

JACOB

[*To* FLORENCE]: Can you do nothing, Mrs. Dodd? Can you not reason with him?

FLORENCE

I think, perhaps—if you'd all go on, up into the foyer, and wait for me, I could do better with him alone. He's inclined to be a bit upset, you know, after a strain like this. But he'll come round.

MR. L.

Florence! You're a woman in a thousand! That's what we'll do. [*To the others*]: We'll leave him to his wife!

[*They all hurry out, speaking as they go.*]

MRS. L.

It will make a very bad impression if he goes now.

MR. L.

Fatal! Absolutely fatal!

MRS. M.

He can't really mean it.

SIR B.

When I was young we didn't make hay of our best opportunities like this.

DAWSON

You never were young, my friend.

MR. M.

It's what they call temperament, I suppose.

MILLICENT

[*Spitefully*]: Then we'll expect you both to join us in a *very* few minutes? [*Goes.*]

DAWSON

[*Going*]: If all else fails, put him into handcuffs!

[*They leave* CHARLES *and* FLORENCE *alone. Applause off dies away.*]

CHARLES

My dear, my dear! Is this wise?

FLORENCE

Father! I must. [*Very much excited*]: You don't understand. Go on with the others. Please!

CHARLES

You'll do no good now. Wait till he's calmed down a bit.

[LEWIS *comes back again.*]

FLORENCE

If I wait I shall be too late. Father! I entreat you! If you ever loved me—— [CHARLES *goes.*] Lewis!

LEWIS

[*Again in his dream*]: Yes?

FLORENCE

I've arranged a little party, all our friends. Won't you come?

LEWIS

[*Staring round*]: Where are they all?

FLORENCE

Listen. I—I—I've been in the wrong. I want to say I'm sorry. [*Pause.*] I came to the concert tonight, full of bitterness and hatred. I felt that the whole of our life together has been a failure.

LEWIS

So it has.

FLORENCE

It's been largely my fault. I'd forgotten—why I married you. But when I heard your Symphony tonight—I remembered. It's been—it's been so wonderful. Lewis! I'm ready to try again, if you will.

LEWIS

Try again?

FLORENCE

This great success! This wonderful moment in your life. Don't throw it all away, just because a few bitter words passed between us this evening.

LEWIS

[*With an effort*]: What are you talking about? [*Remembers*]: This evening! Oh, that!

FLORENCE

It does seem a long time ago, doesn't it?

LEWIS

Too long ago to remember.

FLORENCE

[*Stumbling a little over the difficult words*]: I—I expect I was unjust to Tessa.

LEWIS

That doesn't matter now. I'm sorry, Florence. We can't talk about this. All that's over.

FLORENCE

What can I say to you?

LEWIS

Nothing.

FLORENCE

It's like talking to someone on another planet. My aunt stuck to Sanger—through everything. What she could bear, I can bear. But for your own sake, don't leave England just now.

LEWIS

It's too late now.

FLORENCE

Oh, don't hate me so!

LEWIS

I don't hate you, Florence. [*A little wildly*]: But we must save ourselves, mustn't we?

FLORENCE

For God's sake, wait till to-morrow. Till we can talk of this more calmly. I haven't loved you enough; that's been the trouble. But if we can love enough, if we can hold on to what's best in us, as you do—*as you do* in your music—perhaps we could come through to something that wasn't hatred. Wait till to-morrow.

LEWIS

[*Hesitating*]: What do you mean? How can I wait——

FLORENCE

Oh! [*Stretches out her arms to him, transfigured, as her great moment comes to her*]: Love her! Love her if you must, but love her *enough!*

[*A small pale-faced clerk sidles in with a book and a fountain pen.*]

CLERK

Mr. Dodd?

LEWIS

Hullo?

CLERK

Might I have your autograph, please?

USHER

[*Pursuing clerk in*]: Now then! What's all this? 'Ow did you get in? You must know it ain't allowed.

CLERK

I didn't know. I've been waiting in the corridor. I've been there an hour.

USHER

Serves you right. No business there at all.

LEWIS

He's all right. Here you are. [*He bends over the table and signs the book.*]

FLORENCE

Lewis!

[CHARLES *comes in.*]

CHARLES

Florence! Your guests are all waiting in the foyer. Shall I tell them to go on without you?

FLORENCE

[*Distractedly*]: Oh, tell them to wait—to go—— No, I'll come and explain—— Wait for me, Lewis! I won't go on without you.

[*She goes out with* CHARLES, *turning to look back reluctantly from the doorway.*]

LEWIS

[*Signing*]: There! [*Turns pages*]: What's this?

CLERK

That's Lloyd George. I've got two of him. Hobbs, Steve Donoghue, Melba, Trotsky, Bishop of London, Delysia. I waited three hours to get that.

USHER

Here! Come on! 'Op it!

[*The* CLERK *goes.* LEWIS *sees* ROBERTO.]

LEWIS

Quick, Roberto! Where is she?

[ROBERTO *flings open the door proudly.*]

TESSA

Lewis!

LEWIS

Tessa!

[*They fly into one another's arms. The men exchange glances, and slip out.*]

TESSA

I thought they'd never go!

LEWIS

Oh, Tessa, Tessa! That's over! Thank God, that's over.

TESSA

[*Drawing his head to her breast, and soothing him as if he had been a child*]: Yes, yes, it's all over now. You needn't worry with them any more.

LEWIS

How was it, Tessa? Was it all right?

TESSA

Magnificent! Sanger ought to have been here.

LEWIS

Really?

TESSA

Oh, my darling, my baby, my funny little child, my lover——

LEWIS

I'm dreaming.

TESSA

No, you're not. I'm yours. I love you. Oh, if you knew how much I love you! And all these months, when I've been finding out what I could give you. It was all crushed down and wasted. But now we'll go away and never, never, never come back.

LEWIS

[*Anxiously*]: Can we? Can we ever get away?

TESSA

Of course we can. By the Ostend boat. If we're quick.

LEWIS

As easily as that.

[*The* USHER *comes in again, coughing discreetly.*]

USHER

Excuse me, sir. If you want to get away quietly you'd better use the Royal entrance.

LEWIS

Right! The Royal entrance, Tessa! Just a minute.

[*He goes into the cloakroom for hat and suitcase.*

TESSA *sinks exhausted for a moment into chair by the table.*]

USHER

[*Looking at her*]: Looks blue, don't she? [*To* FIREMAN]: Got anything, Alf?

FIREMAN

'Ere, Missie! You 'ave a drop o' my good hot cocoa. [*Produces it from a peg behind the door, where also hangs his night lantern.*]

[LEWIS *comes back with suitcase.*]

LEWIS

Yes, drink it, Tessa. It'll buck you up.

TESSA

Is there time? The boat train goes at 11.30.

USHER

Boat! Why, you're never going on a boat to-night!

FIREMAN

You run back to your ma, Missie, and get her to tuck you in bed. You'll be safe there.

TESSA

[*Drinking*]: I haven't got a ma.

USHER

Dear me!

TESSA

[*Bravely*]: I'm quite used to this sort of thing. I was born in a room like this.

USHER

You don't say!

TESSA

Oh, well! Not quite, but nearly. I was born in the middle of a first performance of one of my father's operas.

FIREMAN

Very uncomfortable for your ma, that must have been.

[ROBERTO *runs back excited.*]

ROBERTO

Lewis! Tessa! Kvick! Madame! She come back. She stop you eef you don't go.

LEWIS

How did you know we were going?

ROBERTO

By da heart. It tella me everything. Besides, I listen. Always I listen. All da time!

LEWIS

I see. Here! [*Gives him baton*]: You can use this to stir the puddings with.

ROBERTO

Excuse! Please! Madame would not allow——

LEWIS

Wouldn't she? Come, Tessa——

USHER

This way, then.

FIREMAN

Them lights are all out by now. Here! Where's my glim? I'll show yer royal 'ighness the way.

ROBERTO

Lewis! Tessa! I wish you ver' happy, ver' rich, and many many bambini. [*He embraces them*]: Some day I shall come to serve you. Teresa! Da gift for la sposa! [*Produces an old shoe*]: It belong to Sanger. [*Flings it over* TESSA's *head with a shout of laughter.*]

LEWIS

[*Sardonically*]: Aha! I knew there was a slipper in this story somewhere.

TESSA

[*Flinging her arms round* ROBERTO]: Good-bye, darling Roberto!

USHER

Good-bye, Missie. Good luck!

FIREMAN

[*Who has been quietly tearing up the* USHER's *newspaper*]: We're out of weddin' bells [*chuckling*]: but here's the confetti. [*Suddenly throws pieces of the newspaper over them.*]

LEWIS

Good-bye, Roberto.

TESSA

The train! The train!

THE MEN

Good-bye! Good-bye!

[*In a whirl of laughter and good-byes* LEWIS, TESSA, USHER, *and* FIREMAN *disappear down the corridor. The lights flicker in and out several times as a signal of closing.* FLORENCE *appears from the other end of the corridor.*]

FLORENCE

Roberto! You here? Where's Mr. Dodd?

ROBERTO

He is gone, Madame.

FLORENCE

Gone?

ROBERTO

Si, Madame.

FLORENCE

I knew it!—— With Teresa?

ROBERTO

Si, Madame.

FLORENCE

How did she get here? You brought her?

ROBERTO

Si, Madame.

FLORENCE

But it's all a mistake.

ROBERTO

[*Not understanding*]: Si, Madame.

[FIREMAN *appears carrying his lantern.*]

FIREMAN

All out now, please. Lights are going.

FLORENCE

I'm too late. Oh, why? Why?

ROBERTO

I don't understand.

FLORENCE

I was willing to overlook everything.

ROBERTO

Lewis—'e don' overlook anyt'ing. 'E tell me to give you dis. [*Hands her the baton.*]

FLORENCE

This!

[*She turns and walks out slowly, between* FIREMAN *and* ROBERTO, *just as the lights give one more flicker and then go out entirely, leaving only the* FIREMAN'S *lantern.*]

CURTAIN

## ACT THREE

### Scene II

Scene—*A dingy top-floor bedroom in a boarding-house in Brussels. It has a sash window on L with a broken roller blind and some dirty lace curtains. The panes of glass are so dirty that they obscure the view, which, in any event, would only be of roof tops and church spires. There is a simple iron bedstead in the middle of the room, end-on to the audience. The coverings are not attractive. The door is down R. Between door and bedstead is a wash-hand stand. A box-couch at the foot of the bed; a chair or two.*

[*The door is flung open.* Madame Marxse, *an enormous, coarse Belgian woman, enters, ushering in* Lewis *and* Tessa. Tessa *is very exhausted; she clutches in her hands a brown paper parcel, burst open at one end, and in the other the exercise book containing her diary.* Lewis *supports her with one hand; in the other he carries a small, much-battered suitcase, well plastered with hotel labels. He leads* Tessa *to the box-couch, where she sinks exhausted, while* Madame Marxse *goes on talking.* Madame *should speak with a thick Flemish accent.*]

MADAME M.

Ah! Ah! Here we are, my turtle-doves. That will do, I think? If you wish, you may sleep well. Me, I find that a good bed is wasted on a pair of lovers. It is all one to them. But she looks fatigued, *la gosse!* Tired and pale. You have been ill, *petite ange?*

LEWIS

Only on the boat, Madame.

MADAME M.

The boat? Ah! Ah! One understands! When the ship walks, it is not good, *voyons!* But you remember this house? This place? *Chérie?*

TESSA

A little. We were all here once, long ago, weren't we?

MADAME M.

Yes, yes! For three months. [*Holds up three fingers*]: I lodge Sanger and his family. *Dites donc!* They are all well? Yes?

TESSA

I don't know. You see, when Sanger died, we were all separated.

MADAME M.

Ah, that man! That man! So many children he had. It is unknown how many. And now all scat-

tered! Here we have one also. The little Paul. My grandson.

LEWIS

I'd forgotten Paul. How is he, Madame?

MADAME M.

*Mais malade!* He will not live long that one! He is at school with the Jesuits now. And he coughs! *Effrayant!* Many days he is too ill to learn. But still he wins all the prizes, yes!

LEWIS

Takes after his father. They all do. They're all too clever to live.

[TESSA *gives him a quick look, which he does not see.*]

TESSA

My sister Antonia is going to have a baby.

MADAME M.

Aha! The little Tony? I recollect her very well. *Bichette bien jolie!* And to be a mother already! That one expected.

TESSA

[*Primly*]: The child will be born in wedlock.

MADAME M.

*C'est gentil! Mais—toi aussi, n'est-ce-pas?* You also have a lover? Monsieur Dodd? Aha! You shall

learn much. For he is the first, I think, yes? You have begun young! Jesu-Marie! But the daughters of Sanger, they will never die *vielles filles! Non! non!*

LEWIS

[*Irritably*]: Bawdy old thing, isn't she?

MADAME M.

Bawdee? What is bawdee? I think it is something —not very ni-ice. For me, I am entirely *comme-il-faut, voyons!* [*A bell clangs noisily downstairs*]: Ah! Ah! One rings! My bell, it never stop ringing. *Les jeunes gens sont tellement empértes.* How you say? Lovers are impatient. Let me embrace you, *chérie.* Good luck! *Bonne fortune a présent.* Do not be too kind to him. It is not wise. Food is downstairs if you wish. [*The bell rings again.*] I must go. [*As she waddles out, she shakes a finger at* LEWIS]: Aha! *Même jeu toujours? C'est bien rigolo, voyons!* [*She goes.* LEWIS *helps* TESSA *to take off her hat.*]

LEWIS

Lord! What a hag! Fancy! We used to call her the Fairy Queen!

TESSA

Light the gas, will you? And open the window. It's stuffy!

[*He lights gas, and is just going to open window when she calls out*]: Lewis—I do feel so very ill.

LEWIS

[*Embracing her tenderly*]: Ah, my dear one! That's not surprising, with the crossing we had. And you've had no food for nearly twenty-four hours. You'll be all right when you've had supper and a good night's rest. [*Pause—a little anxiously.*] Won't you?

TESSA

I suppose so.

LEWIS

Of course you will.

TESSA

[*Getting up*]: Though I doubt the good night's rest. [*Feels the bed*]: I wonder if this is really Madame's idea of a good bed!

LEWIS

It'll be our bridal bed, I suppose. So it's a pity it shouldn't be comfortable. Let me feel it. Oh! Tessa, it's not so bad. I've slept on worse.

TESSA

Feels to me more like a stone quarry. But this is a very odd place altogether. I'm surprised at you for bringing me here.

LEWIS

I'm a little surprised at myself. I've been living in a silver sty for so long that I'd almost forgotten what this was like. It isn't very nice, is it?

TESSA

Will you look at that indecent little ornament next door to a statue of the Sacred Heart? How Uncle Charles would laugh at it!

LEWIS

Would he?

TESSA

Of course he would. That's why I do. A year ago I wouldn't have thought this a funny room. I'd have taken it for granted. Oh dear! Oh dear! You never can get quite back. Life goes on and little bits of us get lost.

LEWIS

[*Lighting his pipe*]: I liked your Uncle Charles.

TESSA

So did I. I loved him. I wonder if I should have liked living with him in Cambridge.

LEWIS

Were you going to live with him in Cambridge?

TESSA

When I'd left school. Next year. We'd arranged it. His housekeeper can't make tea. I must remember to send him a picture post-card to-morrow.

LEWIS

[*Opening his suitcase and beginning his unpacking by turning it upside down on the floor*]: But do you

really think you might have liked living with him in Cambridge?

TESSA

Perhaps. I'd rather be with you.

LEWIS

I see. [*Extracts a pair of boots from the pile on the floor, and stands uncertainly, staring round him*]: I'm a fool! [*Puts boots on mantelpiece*]: We'll go away to-morrow.

TESSA

[*Lying on the bed*]: Dear heart! Why? Are we the Wandering Jew?

LEWIS

Filthy place!

TESSA

It can't hurt us as long as we're together.

LEWIS

Can't it, my blessing? I'm not so sure. There must be other places——

TESSA

I think you'll find they all look pretty much the same. [*Raises herself on one elbow and looks round with a smile*]: All our rooms will have music on the floor and boots on the mantelpiece.

LEWIS

I ought to have thought—— It took me so much by surprise when you changed your mind in that sud-

den way, I couldn't think of anywhere to go—— Tessa!

TESSA

Um?

LEWIS

You haven't told me yet why you did change at the last.

TESSA

No. And I sha'n't ever tell you.

LEWIS

Why not?

TESSA

It isn't a suitable subject to talk about.

LEWIS

Dear me! [*Sits on bed beside her*]: Tell me!

TESSA

Blest if I do.

LEWIS

Tessa, you must. You must let me have everything now.

TESSA

You have everything, my heart, except that. You'll never know. You can keep on guessing till the cows come home, but I won't tell you.

LEWIS

Something frightened you.

TESSA

Aren't you clever?

LEWIS

I always know when you're frightened. There are two funny little lamps in your eyes, right in the very middle of your eyes, and they always light up when you're afraid. I can see them now. You're frightened still. Tessa! Don't hide away from me! Tell me what it is. Are you ashamed of anything?

TESSA

[*Hiding her face*]: Leave me alone. I feel so ill.

LEWIS

Look at me, my girl. [*Pulls her round and stares at her*]: Dear love! Was it something that Florence said?

TESSA

I sha'n't tell you.

LEWIS

She said something that made you run away. It's an ill wind—— What was it? Why can't you tell me?

TESSA

Because—women oughtn't to tell men—about each other.

LEWIS

I see. [*Pause.*] You're an astounding creature! You listen to that old hag's conversation without turning a hair, and yet a genteel person like Florence——

TESSA

Please! I want to forget all that.

LEWIS

You're the most innocent creature in the world really! [*Stroking her hair with a sort of shy kindness*]: I don't believe you understood half that old devil said.

TESSA

Perhaps not. But I know one thing she thinks. She thinks I'm your fancy lady.

LEWIS

So does Florence, as a matter of fact.

TESSA

Does she? [*Sits up*]: Darling Lewis, I've a hard thing to ask you. If I'm not—what they think—what am I?

LEWIS

You mean, what would I call you if I wasn't your lover?

TESSA

I've heard you say hard things of other women.

LEWIS

[*After a long pause*]: Listen, beloved. Will this do? I wouldn't—I couldn't ever again, in all my life, call any woman by a name that sounded too hard for you. I shall try to think every woman can be to some man what you are to me.

TESSA

That sounds all right. [*Pulls him to her and kisses him*]: Don't worry. I only wanted to know. Put your arms round me. Hold me. [*They sit with clasped arms, looking out of the window*]: Do you know, I never realised before that we live on a star.

LEWIS

[*With a sigh*]: It's an ill star.

TESSA

[*Strangely excited*]: I can feel it to-night, going flaming round and round in space. And you and I the only real live people on it, just clinging on to it, clinging together for a minute or two, before we get lost again. Do you have a feeling that this moment is all—everything? Nothing is behind us, and nothing in front of us. Just only now. I wish it could be now for ever.

LEWIS

So do I.

TESSA

It's getting quite dark. Never mind! [*With a little laugh*]: Another sun will shine to-morrow morn——

[*She sings*]:

"Ah, say not so! Another love will cheer thee,
The sun will shine as bright to-morrow morn."

Do you remember? Shall we see the sunrise through this window, Lewis?

LEWIS

We shall see the stars. [*A pause*]: What's the book you're clutching? You don't mean to say you've brought that silly old diary away with you?

TESSA

You mustn't laugh at my most cherished possession. It's all my past life, this book.

LEWIS

[*Turning the pages*]: It's very short.

TESSA

I haven't been alive so very long. I've put instructions in the beginning for it to be laid in the grave with me.

LEWIS

I know. I've read it.

TESSA

When?

LEWIS

Yesterday. You left it behind you in the music room.

TESSA

You must try not to be so ungentlemanly.

LEWIS

Must I? Well, well! [*Pause.*] My darling! You're shivering! [*Peers at her*]: You really do look very mouldy. Come down to supper.

TESSA

I couldn't really. I don't want anything. I'm too tired.

LEWIS

Well then, I'll get them to send something up. I sha'n't be long.

[*He goes. She tries to sort out the music on the floor, but is evidently too ill to do much. Unpacks her own parcel and takes out her party frock and her nightgown. Begins to try to take off her frock.* LEWIS *comes back.*]

LEWIS

Tessa! Let's get out of here. We'll go away at once.

TESSA

[*In dismay*]: At once. Oh, Lewis! Why?

LEWIS

It's a filthy place. The reek of it seemed to rise up and hit me in the face the moment I got outside the

door. You sha'n't stay here a single night. We'll have something to eat and go.

TESSA

Go? Where?

LEWIS

Back to England.

TESSA

Back to England?

LEWIS

I shall take you back to your uncle.

TESSA

To-night? Oh, Lewis, I couldn't.

LEWIS

A convent will put you up for the night.

TESSA

A convent?

LEWIS

Yes, the largest we can find.

TESSA

Never! You won't take me out of this house alive. So you needn't think it.

LEWIS

Do listen to reason.

TESSA

I've come away with you because I think it's right. Because I think it's best. And I shall stay with you.

LEWIS

But I'm not sure if *I* think it's right.

TESSA

What you think doesn't matter.

LEWIS

I should have thought it did.

TESSA

You've thought a lot of silly things in your life.

LEWIS

All the more reason for trying to be sensible now.

TESSA

I'm the deciding person.

LEWIS

Even you have been known to change your mind?

TESSA

It's made up now. I won't leave you.

LEWIS

But, Tessa——

TESSA

We've run away and we've got to go on running away.

LEWIS

God knows, it's not for myself——

TESSA

You don't suppose it's for me?

LEWIS

But——

TESSA

I've been through so much for you. Don't always go on dithering and losing everything. Will you *never* understand?

LEWIS

Understand what?

TESSA

It would be living our life all over again—to give you up a second time. Remember before?

LEWIS

Before?

TESSA

The night Sanger died. I told you then. But you never understand anything until it's too late.

LEWIS

I'm not too late now, anyway.

TESSA

Oh, you *are* so blind, my love. Are you *quite* sure you won't be too late again? [*Suddenly flinging her*

*arms round him and sobbing bitterly*]: Oh, my cruel, cruel love. I couldn't bear it.

LEWIS

My darling.

TESSA

I can't ever leave you. I won't. I won't.

LEWIS

All right, you sha'n't. You sha'n't. Only stop crying now. I don't know you like this.

TESSA

Kiss me. Kiss me. [*He does so.*] Again—again —as if it were never no more. [*They embrace.* TESSA *struggles with her dress.*] Damn these buttons! [*Her dress half off*]: Oh, Lewis!

LEWIS

Here, let me help you. [*He lifts the dress off her.*]

TESSA

Now will you please to go and sit down out of the way and wait for me.

[*He obediently does so, sitting on the box-couch. She falls back quite exhausted on the bed.*]

LEWIS

At all events let me write to your uncle.

TESSA

Oh, what's the good of that?

LEWIS

I want him to know where you are. Suppose anything happened to me? Suppose I got run over by a train?

TESSA

You are apt to lose your head in traffic.

LEWIS

We can't have you stranded.

TESSA

I can look after myself.

LEWIS

No, you can't. I'm going to write. [*He reaches out for pad and pencil.*]

TESSA

Write if you like. But I—won't—give you up—any more.

LEWIS

You sha'n't. But I'll just tell him where you are. [*He starts to write*]: I'll post it to-night. I'll explain everything. [*Stops, confronted by a difficulty*]: Though it's not so easy to know how to begin.

TESSA

[*Gasping for air*]: It's very stuffy in here.

LEWIS

Well then, open the window. [*Writes without looking at her.*]

[TESSA *staggers across and tries to do so. She is evidently in great pain.*]

TESSA

I can't open it. It's stiff.

LEWIS

Try at the top. How will this do? "Dear Charles, I love your niece, and as soon as things can be arranged we are to be married. Meanwhile this is our address." That's not much. But it's really all there is to it.

[*After another attempt at the window, she sinks down on the floor with a little sigh.* LEWIS *goes over letter again.*]

"Dear Charles, I love your niece *enough*." Who was it now that said, "love her enough"—— [*It is very silent. He turns round*]: Tessa! Have you fainted? Tessa! Darling! [*He carries her to the bed*]: Don't frighten me so! [*Hanging over* TESSA]: Tessa! She's dying! Dear Christ, help me!

[TESSA *stirs and sighs.*]

Tessa! Look at me. Speak to me.

TESSA

Light the light.

LEWIS

[*Frightened*]: It *is* lighted.

TESSA

I can't see. Oh, Lewis, I can't breathe—— The gas—— It's dark—another sun—to-morrow—Lewis —to-morrow—— [*Dies.*]

[*He rushes to the window, sees a wedge at the top, pulls it out and throws up the sash.* MADAME MARXSE, *carrying a tray, kicks open the door.*]

MADAME M.

*Eh bien? Qu'est ce que vous faites la?*

LEWIS

[*Standing by the window*]: Tessa's got away. She's safe. She's dead.

CURTAIN

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